

LETTERS

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL;

ADDRESSED TO A

YOUNG GENTLEMAN in INDIA, and OTHERS.

Designed to inspire the

MINDS OF YOUTH

With the Love of

PIETY and VIRTUE.

BY DANIEL ^RTURNER, M. A.

Now to grave books I bid the mind retreat,
And such as make me rather *good* than *great*.

PARNELL.

The SECOND EDITION.

HENLEY:

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ERRATA.

- Page 23. line 5. for *spir*, read *spirit*
38. l. 1. for *possesses*, read *possess*
47. l. 1. after *find*, read *it*
53. l. 10. from bottom, for *of glory*, read *of his glory*
78. l. 2. for *other hand*, read *one hand*
6. in note, dele *the* after *and*
212. l. 1. for *he*, read *the*

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AN
INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS
TO THE
R E A D E R.

Occasioned by the Publication of the following
LETTERS.

TRUE RELIGION is of such very great importance to the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind, that a serious and modest attempt to promote a due regard to it, though not executed with all the ability that could be wished, may justly claim some degree of indulgence from the good, especially in this age of excessive dissipation and pleasure; in which the unsuspect-
ing

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ing YOUTH, for *one* friendly monitor to assist him in preserving the purity and peace of his conscience, and his just hopes of immortal felicity, meets a *thousand* temptations to sacrifice them all to the momentary gratifications of depraved appetite. In such circumstances, attempts of this nature cannot well be too abundantly multiplied, nor such salutary hints as are here given, be too often repeated.

Reading is become a fashionable amusement, and a taste for it greatly prevalent amongst persons of sense and ingenuity. A thing undoubtedly right in itself, and what deserves to be encouraged, as one necessary means of intellectual improvement: but it is of the utmost consequence, that this taste be properly directed, and indulged with some caution, especially by those in
the

the younger years of life, left instead of being the means of such improvement, it should, on the contrary, prove the bane of their virtue and happiness. While therefore there are so many books of the vitiating kind; or, to say the least, that very much tend to weaken the evidences and motives of religion, inflame the love of pleasure, and lead off the mind from the most interesting objects of its attention: I say, while this is the case, it will not be sufficient to declaim in the warmest manner against this kind of books, or even demonstrate their pernicious tendency; we must endeavour to produce better, such as are calculated to enlighten the understanding, please the affections, and inspire them with a just reverence for religion.

This is what is attempted in the

A

following

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following Letters ; *several* of which were addressed to a young Gentleman abroad, and others of them to some of my young friends at home.

I have preserved the original *form* of Letters, though altered and enlarged, as best agreeing with that general and desultory manner in which the subjects are treated ; and, in which, perhaps, they are best treated, when, not the studious, but the people of business, and those of the younger sort, (who have only their leisure hours for this purpose) are supposed to be the principal readers.—*They* are not only naturally inclined to chuse the books that promise them amusement, rather than those which require a laboured attention ; but also find, by experience, that such kind of reading is generally best adapted to their time and capacity, and consequently

TO THE READER. . . v

quently most likely to engage their attention, and impress their minds.

Though the sentiments here may not appear new and uncommon, to persons very conversant with books; yet, perhaps some of them, by being set in a new light, may wear so much the form of novelty, as not to be intirely destitute of the power of pleasing, even upon that principle. The same thoughts too will sometimes recur; and no wonder they should, in letters written with the same general view, and the latter, at a time when the contents of the former were forgotten: but, I trust, the different manner of expressing them, and the different connections they are placed in, will be a sufficient apology with the candid, for letting them pass in the publication.

As the chief and original design of

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these epistolary essays was, to cultivate in younger minds a serious regard to *practical religion*, I have purposely avoided all *merely* speculative points, so often contested with uncharitable violence amongst professed Christians. I have also, for the same reason, declined all formal controversy with the Deist; and the rather, as sometimes such occasional hints in favour of Christianity, as naturally arise from almost every view of it, find a nearer way to the heart, and strike it with greater force, than long and laboured arguments. Though, by the way, after all the specious shew of reasoning, with which the Deists have attacked the divine revelation, have they really invalidated all the abundant evidence, or indeed any material part of it, which its sincere and judicious friends have produced

duced so repeatedly in its favour, even their own sober consciences being judges? Or, supposing, as they would make us believe, they have demolished the Christian system of religion, have they given us a better? Or, indeed, can they?—That better becomes the paternal government, justice, goodness, and the other perfections of the Deity? Is better adapted to recover human nature from its dark, corrupted, guilty state? That can more effectually dissipate our reasonable and just fears, cherish our hopes, support us under the sorrows of life, the terrors of death, and of the eternal world? That can give us better or more useful notions of God, or of ourselves, more clearly state the duties of morality and devotion, or afford us stronger and more animating motives for the performance of them?

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Or, in a word, that is better calculated to carry us above all undue influence from this world, and open to us more comfortable and glorious prospects in another?—If not, to what purpose do they endeavour to persuade us out of our regards to Christianity, unless to set mankind loose from all the most powerful obligations of religion and morality, and make the world ten thousand times more wicked and miserable than it is?

The reader of nicer taste and critical judgment, should he happen to look over these papers, will find, perhaps, but little to approve, and much to censure. Amongst other defects, he will doubtless remark, what he would call a capital one, viz. that there is not that ease and freedom in the stile, which ought to distinguish epistolary writings.

from

from almost all others. I grant it. But it should be considered, that that kind of stile is more peculiar to familiar letters, where the subject is matter of mere amusement; and that therefore some of our greatest writers have departed from *that manner*, when the subject seemed to require it. They have handled some of the deep points of philosophy and theology in the epistolary way, and yet made use of the same stile and form of expression, as they would have done had they written in any other way. The like may be observed in other instances, where the greatness of the subject itself, or its importance to the reader, will unavoidably give an air of dress and solemnity to the stile, very different from that negligence and familiarity so becoming in common letters. This is the case

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with me. The main subjects of the following letters are serious, and enter very deeply into our eternal interest; my business therefore was, if possible, to engage the attention, and awaken the conscience, and not *barely* to amuse the imagination. This, I thought, I was more likely to effect in the manner I have attempted, than in any other. However, if the end be but answered, and any (particularly *young*) reader be led by this publication to see a divine excellency in religion; be inspired with a deeper reverence of God, and a more fervent love to his Redeemer;—if already under the governing influence of the sacred principles of true piety and goodness, he become more confirmed in them;—if tottering on the brink of vice, he be preserved from falling; or, if fallen, awakened to a
sense

sense of his condition, and reclaimed; the defects obvious to the eye of nicest criticism will give me little concern. I write for the *heart*, and if, through the divine blessing, that be but properly influenced with what I have written, I resolve not to be deeply affected with the censures of uncandid severity; though I would by no means slight the just animadversions of sound judgment.

The critic, who has *candour* to moderate, as well as *learning* and *genius* to direct, his censures, ought to be esteemed and venerated. He is not only the *judge*, but the *protector* of the literary interest and pleasures of the public, and of the honours and privileges of the several authors, who pretend to instruct or entertain it. But it derogates extremely from the true dignity of that character, when they who assume it, censure

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censure and applaud at random, and without considering fairly all the circumstances of the case before them, necessary to the forming of a right judgment; especially when they treat with scornful severity, any writer not vain of his abilities; and who, with a tolerable capacity, appears to endeavour sincerely at promoting the real interest and happiness of mankind. Critics of such a cast are so far from meriting respect, that they are often more contemptible, than the authors they so inconsiderately affect to despise.

Though I have given only a general view of religion, and endeavoured to express myself in the most inoffensive manner; yet, no doubt, there will be here and there some particular passages, which the *violent* in all party extremes, will be offended at. They see every thing

thing in the clearest light, (as they imagine) and are at once very *positive*, and very *uncharitable*. To such I make no apology; it would be to no purpose if I did. I profess myself a friend to LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, in the fullest meaning of the words; and therefore esteem no man the less for his differing from me his religious opinions, provided he maintains that difference with candour and benevolence. But BIGOTRY is a character, that, however speciously dignified with pretences to *holy zeal*, must, to every liberal mind, be peculiarly un-amiable, and even contemptible. The true Christian himself, when (as is sometimes the case) he happens to be tinctured with it, loses just so much of his real worth and excellency, and becomes an object of pity, though we cannot help loving,

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ving him for his sincerity and good meaning*.

But, after all, it will, perhaps, be objected, “ Who amongst the young and
“ the gay, in this age of thoughtless-
“ ness, dissipation, and vice, will give
“ themselves the trouble of reading
“ over even *one* of these Letters, which,
“ in the very face of them, carry some-
“ thing so intirely the reverse of their
governing

* The cool, considerate, observer of human nature will find, amongst those who profess the most liberal principles, and talk loudest of candour and charity, some that cannot bear with patience any the least opposition to their favorite opinions; and who give themselves as great airs of infallibility, and discover as much bitterness of spirit, as the bigots they are so forward to condemn. To such as these, I doubt not, what I have hinted on the doctrine of the atonement and mediation of CHRIST, will be offensive. But they would do well to consider they *may be* mistaken; and that what appears absurd and irrational to them, *may possibly be* a discovery of infinite wisdom and goodness, of the highest importance to the interest of mankind, and capable of a most rational defence.

governing temper, and so likely to provoke their spleen and aversion?"

And yet, I answer, where is the *father* that would not wish his *gay son* to give himself such kind of trouble?—I acknowledge very few, indeed, of those who are totally immersed in pleasure, and have intirely lost all taste for religion, all feelings of conscience, all reverence for the Divine Majesty, and a future state, can be supposed to look into such books as this.—But, I trust, bad as the times are, there are numbers who are not sunk so low in moral corruption, and who, though from their age, disposition, and situation in life, they may be exposed to strong temptations, and feel some beginnings of this epidemic madness, are not intirely averse to soberer entertainments, nor quite incapable of tasting real pleasure
in

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in the contemplation of religion and virtue. Amongst these I hope to find some readers.


To conclude: Though these Letters are addressed to the young more especially, it is to be hoped, they will afford some degree of pleasure and improvement to others. To feel, and live, under the influence of genuiue and unaffected religion, is not only the glory of *youth*, but the best solace and delight of *age*; affords the surest consolations, and firmest supports to the mind, under the various trials of life, and the prospects of death, and an eternal world; and is therefore, a matter of universal concernment, *the one thing needful* to all. In this, indeed, I say no more than has been said ten thousand times over, and what is generally known and acknowledged; but what, nevertheless, from
the

TO THE READER. xvii.

the too little attention generally paid to it, requires to be repeated, and, from its infinite importance, to be urged upon the consciences of mankind, as a means of awakening them to a just regard to their real happiness, which is so connected with true religion, that it is utterly unattainable without it.

D. T.

P. S. The notes in the following letters were added upon the design of publishing them, as necessary to illustrate or justify some particular passages.



L E T.

LETTERS

ADDRESSED MORE ESPECIALLY TO
YOUNG PERSONS

LETTER I.

To * * * * *, Esq.

Upon his Son's going abroad.

YOU have, my dear sir, extremely obliged me, in gratifying my curiosity and concern for your welfare, as in your last. I wish you a fine day, and good spirits, for your expedition to Gravesend, and that your parting on both sides may be with that chearfulness and satisfaction, which should always accompany a consciousness of doing for the best, and an humble reliance on that providence,

B

whose

whose kind protection extends to the uttermost parts of the earth, as surely and effectually, as through the narrow limits of our little home.

“ I cannot go

“ Where universal love not smiles around ;

“ Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons,”

says the elegant THOMSON, with great propriety of sentiment. A sentiment that conveys a very pleasing idea of the divine providence, and encourages our humble confidence in it at all times, in every condition of life, and is peculiarly suitable to your present situation of mind.

We all join in our most earnest prayers and wishes for the young adventurer's prosperous voyage, and hope in due time to receive a good account of his health, success in business, and growing reputation for universal goodness; that he may be preserved not only from the danger of the seas, of change of climate, &c.

but

but also from those infinitely greater dangers, arising from the bad example of the people he must, unavoidably too often, converse with, I do not mean the poor stupid heathens, but the worse than heathens, degenerate vicious Christians; who, with all their advantages of better knowledge of the nature and reasons of their duty, sink infinitely below it; and whose horrid prophaneness, intemperance, injustice, false notions of honour, and mad pursuit of worse than brutal pleasures, render them the plagues of society, the bane of the dearest and most important interest of mankind.

You have given him a genteel and virtuous education, and I hope he will be always ambitious of acting worthy of it; and particularly remember, that real happiness, even in this life, is inseparably connected with the fear of God; that the vicious, sooner or later, must be miserable; that an inward reverence of the

supreme being, a willing submission to his indisputable authority, a sincere and fervent love of his amiable perfections, a desire to please him and enjoy his favour, and the careful cultivation of every moral excellency, are not only compatible with the character of a gentleman, but essentially necessary to render it accomplished. It is one of the grossest of the errors so common amongst the *great vulgar*, as COWLEY calls them, to imagine, that RELIGION, the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, which is so evidently adapted to restore the human nature to its true dignity and perfection, inspire us with the most delightful and glorious hopes, support those hopes with the most solid reasons, and carry them through even eternity itself—I say it is the greatest of errors, and a contradiction to common sense, to imagine that a religion, which when understood, appears so well adapted to answer such high and important ends

as

LETTER I.

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as these, should be a mere imposition upon the credulity of mankind; designed to amuse the weak and illiterate multitude with imaginary hopes and fears, and no better than a subject of ridicule to men of sense and spirit, born to high-life, and educated with a taste for its grandeur, and the knowledge of the world.

It is easy to perceive, upon the least cool reflection, that MAN is not designed to exist in this present state only: he feels himself born for immortality, and justly concludes, that after a short probation here, he must be fixed in a state of pleasure, or of pain, to which he can assign no period; and consequently, that without true religion, which, according to the Christian scheme, includes in it repentance of sin, faith in CHRIST as a Redeemer, and the steady practice of rational piety and moral goodness; that without this it is impossible to be happy in that endless hereafter.

These are thoughts indeed, that seldom enter the heads, much less the hearts, of the generality of people in higher or lower life, with a due degree of power; and yet some of the most obvious, and such as naturally arise from our relation to our maker, and our inseparable connection with a future state; and are the almost spontaneous suggestions of a conscience enlightened by divine revelation.

You, my dear sir, know the truth and importance of these things, and, I am sure, with, with the anxiety of a father, that your son may always feel their salutary influence. And I doubt not, but the present situation you are in, greatly increases this anxiety, and that you are ready to fear what may be the event of the measures you are taking; but remember, for your consolation, you are, according to the best of your knowledge, in the way of your duty, have committed this son, with many prayers, into the hands

hands of GOD, the allwise, the almighty, and most gracious parent of the universe; who delights in mercy, and has promised an happy issue upon the whole; to all events committed to him in humble and pious confidence. May the tender emotions you must feel in the parting embrace, be attended with the fortitude and cheerfulness that confidence tends to inspire! With the most sincere and affectionate regards,

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

To Mr. ****,

After his Arrival in INDIA.

THE particular share, my dear sir, I have in the friendship of your excellent father, your own openness and benevolence of heart, and the many other good qualities I see you possessed of, have interested me greatly in your favour, and given me a sincere and warm concern for your happiness in both worlds; which, at present, I do not know how better to express, than by the contents of the following letter,

You have, through the indulgent providence of the Almighty, escaped the dangers of the seas, and arrived safe and well at the place of your intended habitation, and, I trust, are happy in a just sense of that indulgence; and as you find yourself in a country overspread with heathenish

thenish darkness and superstition, are sensible also of the infinite advantage of the Christian revelation; by the means of which *you* have attained to such knowledge of the nature and perfections of the true and eternal God, the majesty of his government, and the riches of his mercy, how to worship him acceptably, and where to fix your hope of eternal life and happiness, as *they* must be entire strangers to. This I trust you seriously consider, as an instance of the distinguishing unmerited favour of the universal parent to you; and consequently a loud call upon your gratitude, and such as lays you under peculiar obligations to cultivate universal goodness, and set an example of moral excellency, as much superior to the best of theirs, as your advantages evidently are. To animate you to this, my dear friend, is the principal design of the present letter, which, if favourably received, as I doubt not it will,

will, may be followed with several others of the same nature and tendency. The sum and substance of this moral excellency is comprised in two words, viz. RELIGION and VIRTUE.

By VIRTUE here, I mean the constant, faithful, discharge of all the duties of self-government and social life, from settled principles of moral rectitude in the mind. The only true foundation and proper support of which, is RELIGION.

By RELIGION, I mean a divine internal principle, uniting the soul to the supreme excellence, the living and true God ; his love shed abroad in the heart, and shewing itself, not in the senseless furious zeal of a party, the cant of enthusiasm, or the false fears and mortifying austerities of superstition ; but in the true fear and love of God, and constantly worshipping him in spirit and in truth, according to those discoveries of himself and his will, with which he is pleased

LETTER II.

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to favour us; and which we Christians find in the sacred records of the BIBLE.—

—In that divine book, we have a complete system of religion, such as is nowhere else to be found. Such a view of the DEITY and his perfections, of our duty to him, and the way of obtaining his favour, as best suits with the depraved state of mankind, and is best adapted to form their minds to the love and practice of true piety and virtue. For there we see the Most High in the full lustre of his moral character, viz. declaring his righteous resentments against sin, and reconciling the world to himself by the mediation and sacrifice of Christ his son; the true knowledge of which has a natural tendency and peculiar fitness to melt the heart, and inspire it with divine hope and love, which are the springs of all genuine obedience. There the real beauty and proper nature of virtue, and the
awful

awful and delightful sanctions with which the practice of it is enforced, are justly displayed, and effectually taught. The laws, there written, are transcripts of the rectitude of the divine mind, and appointed for our observance by the divine authority. The threatnings there denounced against transgressors, are the decrees of infinite rectitude; and the promises of mercy there declared to the truly penitent, are the pledges of infinite love. It is there we learn, indeed, a religion worthy of God, and perfective of human purity and felicity. Let the BIBLE, therefore, my dear friend, I intreat you, be daily and attentively perused; especially the New Testament, with which you can converse in the original language. Let it be also your daily prayer to the Almighty, that he would enable you to understand the important lessons there given you, and feel the motives with which a practical regard to them is urged upon
your

your conscience. Thus you may reasonably expect to meet with the blessing of providence to give success to all your just endeavours, or effectually support you under your disappointments; enable you to enjoy the pleasures of life with innocence and satisfaction, and meet even death itself with the heart-cheering hope of an happy immortality.

I am not insensible, my friend, that the gaiety and vigour of your youthful spirits, the propensities of fallen nature to present sensible gratifications, the glare of wordly glory, and the example of too many about you, are all against the conduct I am recommending; but the serious reflection of a few minutes will serve to convince you, in theory at least, that it is just and good. That whatever satisfaction infidelity and vice may promise, and seem at first to give, they must miserably deceive their votaries at last; but, that the pleasures attendant on RELI-
GION

GLORY and VIRTUE are real, solid, growing, and as lasting as your existence; they are satisfying and eternal. These, therefore, have deservedly engaged the attention of the wisest and best of men, in some of the most exalted stations of life, in all ages of the world, as every way becoming the character, and consistent with the business and the pleasures of the Gentleman, as well as the Peasant. And it is a peculiar satisfaction and delight to a mind capable of relishing moral excellencies, to see a sensible, good-natured, well educated youth, living under the prevailing influence of genuine unaffected religion—see him in spite of all the soft allurements of vice, the ridicule of the vicious, and the contagious, and too often fatal power of their example, bravely maintain an habitual reverence of the great and blessed God, just sentiments of his own dignity

nity * as a rational and immortal being, and a strict regard to the practice of every duty.—And with the consciousness of all this, see him humbly sensible of the imperfections of his character, and therefore casting himself at the feet of JESUS for his pardon and acceptance with GOD. Thus he not only enjoys felicity in himself, but gives it to others, by becoming a truly imitable example to all his young acquaintance, and an honour and delight to his dearest relations. They rejoice in him while they live, and leave their most affectionate blessings with him when they die; he fills up their places in the world with growing reputation, and becomes, in his

—“ Nor appear’d

“ Less than arch-angel ruin’d.”

PARAD. Lost.

If this elegant thought of MILTON’s be just, surely some dignity may be shew’d to fallen man;—he is still rational and immortal.

his turn, a sincere friend, a tender husband, a careful parent, and a common benefactor; and after a life spent in piety and happiness, he dies, full of honours, and full of years; and what is infinitely more, full of that divine consolation and joy, that the consciousness of such a disposition and conduct, and the well-grounded hope of immortal blessedness, must naturally give.

And this is the figure, my friend, I imagine, to myself, of you. God grant it may be more than imagination, and that you may appear in these really amiable colours to the world, to your own heart, and even in his sight who sees all things as they really are!

But on the other hand, what more shocking and distressing spectacle in the world can there be, than a once hopeful youth, blest with all the necessary means of happiness and usefulness, breaking through the restraints
of

of a pious education, giving himself up to the dictates of unbridled appetite; and, in spite of the admonitions of his friends, the rebukes of his conscience, the awful threatenings, and gracious promises of his BIBLE, *rushing* headlong, with the giddy, unthinking many, into fashionable wickedness; and after being the grief and scandal of his family, the pest of society, during a short and wretched life, laden with diseases, infamy, and guilt, dying with execrations on the past, and horror of the future!

This is a scene not merely painted but real, and not unfrequent in these times of growing infidelity and vice; but which, I hope, my dear friend, you will never see, but in others, and that with a just mixture of compassion, abhorrence, and dread.

I only add, that you have our joint wishes from our hearts, for your prosperity, and that we may live to see you

C

again

again in your native country, as amiable,
and worthy of esteem, as competent riches,
sincere piety, and universal goodness,
can make you !

I am, &c.

LET.

LETTER III.

To the same.

YOUR obliging letters, my dear sir, dated from ———, arrived safe, in due time, and gave all your friends here a great deal of satisfaction. I wish that to me had been much longer, as it would have been so much the more agreeable and entertaining. But short as it is, it has convinced me, that you are not only ready to hear, but have good sense to discern the propriety of the advice given you, and a disposition to apply it to practice. I am particularly pleased, likewise, with the discovery of your sentiments in favour of those religious hints I gave you in my last; and from the encouragement you have given me, to write you another, yet longer letter, to animate and support you in your so good resolutions.

We

We, who have lived some time in the world, have too often seen, that even a virtuous disposition, supported by the sincerest resolutions, has not always been able to withstand the force of temptation, but, in some unguarded moment, has been unhappily prevailed upon to sacrifice the solid pleasures of conscious innocence, to the flattering dreams of delight in criminal indulgences. And though my better hopes of you forbid me to entertain any such unpleasing thoughts of your conduct, yet having particularly remarked those passages in your letter, where you say, — “ That good advice
“ is seldom to be met with in that part
“ of the world where I am, but scenes
“ of debauchery and wickedness continually before my eyes ;” — I thought in my duty, as a friend, to suggest something in my way, that might be likely to preserve you from the pernicious influence of such example, and secure your
virtue,

virtue, and the peace of mind dependent upon it; or, as Mr. THOMSON elegantly expresses it,

—————“ Save the fall
“ Of virtue struggling on the brink of vice*.”

I know your social and benevolent temper will not suffer you to live without some particular intimacies and connections, nor would I wish you to do so. Man is born for society, and owes a great deal of his happiness to it. But it is of very great consequence, that you make choice of the best company possible, the best I mean with respect to morals; such as have, at least, some reverence for GOD and religion, for virtue and a future state; some capacity for feeling the force of moral excellency and obligation.

But as you must sometimes, doubtless, be exposed to the occasional conversation, at least, of such as are almost, if not altogether abandoned to vice and prophaneness,

C 3

phaneness,

* Thomson's Summer.

phaneness, and are capable of relishing scarcely any other pleasures than such as arise from the gratification of their depraved appetites ;—as this, I say, must be sometimes the case, you cannot be too much upon your guard against the danger. It is right, indeed, to be always ready to contribute to the satisfaction of all about you, as far as possible, and to do kind and obliging things even to the worst ; but, at the same time, take care that the benevolence of your nature does not prove a snare to your virtue, by laying you too open to the influence of a sort of people, that will hardly think of any other way of returning your kindness, than by hurting your morals, under the appearance of friendship. In this situation, therefore, you will find it absolutely necessary, with an humble dependence on the Almighty, to exert your utmost efforts, and call in all the powers of divine grace to your assistance. And
here

here particularly, it will be of the greatest consequence, not to suffer any sentiment, unbecoming your rational and immortal nature, your relation to the great God, and your hope of his friendship, ever to find the least countenance or indulgence in your heart, much less to dwell there; and to cultivate always such an habitual realizing sense of the presence of God, his majesty, power, mercy, and the sacred obligations you are under to please him above all, that you may feel its influence upon every such emergency, feel yourself restrained by the consciousness of his all-beholding eye, and supported by a dependence on his all-upholding hand.— In a word, that you make it your concern, that the principles of our holy religion, may so live in you, so mingle with all your thoughts, purposes, and springs of action, that you may find their divine assistance always ready at hand in
the

the hour of temptation. — Yet, at the same time, see that your religion sits perfectly easy upon you, that is, without any fanatical grimace, and affectation of sanctity; so that though it appear in your countenance and behaviour at all times, as indeed it ought to do, it may appear as the effect of rational conviction and rectitude of mind, under the influence of divine truth, and not of the mere prejudice of education, much less of senseless enthusiasm and superstition.

A due attainment in these things will give you a vast advantage over those vicious intruders upon your better inclinations; will inspire you with a just sense of your real superiority; give you dignity even in their eyes, if they have any understanding, and enable you to look down upon them in a manner they must feel. They may at first, perhaps, by tempting occasions, entreaties, flatteries, and every art of wicked persuasion, endeavour

LETTER III.

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deavour to draw you into the same sentiments and course of life with themselves ; but the temper and conduct above recommended, will enable you to excuse yourself so readily, and with such spirit and address, as will, at once, disappoint and silence them. And though these repulses should lead them more particularly into a view of your religious principles, and consequently to attack them with all the powers of banter and ridicule, in order, if possible, to make you ashamed of what is, indeed, your truest glory ; yet, even here, the consciousness of that superiority of character, with which real virtue and religion usually favour their sincere votaries, will naturally inspire your mind with fortitude ; give an undisturbed composure and steady serenity to your countenance ; and enable you to treat, even their most spirited ridicule, with that determined, though benevolent, indignation and contempt, it deserves :

serves : and this, with their consciousness of their own littleness and want of consequence, by this means thoroughly awakened, will so surprise and confound them, as soon to rid you of their impertinence.

It is said, " that the righteous is bold
" as a lion." So he may, and ought to be. When, therefore, men of real virtue fall by the solicitations or ridicule of the vicious, it is owing, very often, entirely to their want of courage and resolution; and this to the want of a just sense of the dignity and importance of their characters. They should, therefore, so far as is consistent with an humble sense of their obligations to the grace of God, and dependance upon it, endeavour to consider more particularly and attentively the real greatness and majesty of virtue, and the real littleness and meanness of vice; and cherish that just and laudable pride, if I may so call it, so necessary

cessary and useful in this conflict. Thus the Apostles often remind the Christians to whom they write, of their high calling, and relation to the Eternal Father, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as motives to a worthy and becoming conduct.

But after all, the danger of frequenting vicious company is so extremely great; that it requires much more prudence and circumspection, resolution and courage, than commonly falls to the share of young persons, even of the best dispositions and greatest abilities, improved by the most rational and pious education, to guard effectually against it. It is like breathing in a pestilential air, without knowing it to be such; where we draw in the most fatal and deadly poison, under the notion of necessary refreshment and delight. Many a sober, and even religiously inclined youth, who has given his real friends the most pleasing hopes of his making a figure in the world, as a
man

man of business, virtue, piety, has sadly disappointed these hopes; been lost to all usefulness to others, but that of being a terrible example; and sunk into utter perdition, all prospects of happiness to himself in respect of both worlds; all merely through the pernicious influence of bad company.

It is therefore certainly much more safe, and, indeed, an indispensable duty owing to yourself, my friend, to keep entirely out of the way of such temptation, if possible. However, by no means in the world should you be induced to enter into any particular connections and intimacy with such dangerous enemies to your dearest and most important interest.

The pious king of Israel breaks out into a kind of benevolent rapture in the view of the good man's felicity in this case.—“ Oh the happy, thrice happy
“ man

"man*, that walketh not in the counsel
" of the ungodly, and standeth not in
" the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the
" seat of the scornful, but his delight is
" in the law of Jehovah." The obser-
vation indeed is old, and with us very
commonly repeated; and therefore too
little regarded; but nothing in the world
can be more elegant, just, pertinent, or
more worthy of our serious attention.
And so much of this mind was another
princely writer, of the greatest fame for
his universal knowledge, that he gives it
by way of advice, and delivers it with a
most remarkable vehemence and energy
of expression:—"Enter not into the
" path of the wicked, go not in the way
" of evil men,—AVOID IT,—PASS NOT
" BY IT,—TURN FROM IT,—and PASS
" AWAY."

* For so it is acknowledged the sacred original
may be justly rendered.

"AWAY." And all this receives a vast addition of force, when we consider it as communicated to us, under the direction and sacred authority of the Spirit of GOD, whose dictates it is most certainly our duty and interest to follow, however different they may happen to be from those which the vogue of the world, and the prevailing opinions and practice of the many, would lead us to prefer before them.

Singularity, indeed, is a frightful word to people who are always governed by mere popular taste and fashion. And let it be so to you, my friend, in things indifferent, and that are not likely to have any pernicious influence upon your piety and morals. But when the alternative is, that you must either be singular or sin against GOD, singularity is then a virtue, and even more than a mere virtue, it is heroic excellency and glory! It is to appear in a character that, however

ever ignorant and deluded mortals may affect to despise, those wise and benevolent spirits, that watch over the conduct of the good, always admire and applaud, and the blessed God himself graciously rewards with peculiar marks of his favour and blessing.

I am, &c.

LET.

LETTER IV.

To the same. In Continuation.

AS one principal means of supporting the character and conduct recommended in my last, my dear young friend, give me leave to observe the absolute necessity of setting apart some time every day for retirement from the world, self reflection, reading and considering of the holy scriptures, thinking over the great concerns of your spiritual and eternal interest, and for the worship of Almighty GOD, in adoration, thanksgiving, and prayer,

This, I confess, is a kind of advice that a libertine would be apt to sneer at, and say, in his heart, at least, that it favoured too much of monkery and the priesthood, to be relished by young gentlemen of spirit, that had opportunity and taste for the pleasures of the world in which he lives; and would add, perhaps,

haps, that it was mean, unnecessary, contemptible. But I am well assured you are capable of more just and rational reflection, and when you do reflect, will readily acknowledge the propriety of what I have said,

Some confine their idea of virtue to the duties we owe to ourselves, and to society, in the concerns of this life and world, as if this were the whole duty of man. But our BIBLES give us a far more perfect idea of it. They tell us, it is not enough to be temperate, just, merciful; but that we must also, WALK HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD.—Even heathens have taught the same doctrine.* And, indeed, it is impossible for a man seriously to reflect without finding something within him approving it. We stand in a pecu-

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liar

* Pythagoras begins his golden verses with

Αθανατος μιν πρῶτα Θεῶς

Τίμα, &c.

Thy sacred homage first to GOD be paid, &c.

liar relation to GOD and another world, and reason and conscience tell us, that there are peculiar duties and interests arising from that relation, which must be of the most serious importance, and demand our constant attention and care, however neglected by the rest of mankind.—

—If we are bound, as all the world allow, to reverence, love, and obey the fathers of our flesh, how much more the father of our spirits?—Our obligations to them are great, but arise from a subordinate and secondary relation; our relation to him is original and supreme; and our obligations must be so too. And, indeed, all our duties to society, arise properly from our relation to HIM as the great LORD of all; and from that order, connection, and fitness of things, which he has constituted, and are all best and most effectually discharged, by an habitual heart-impressing sense of those obligations

gations we are under to HIM. And if we must indeed exist after death in another world, and our condition there be more happy or miserable than it is here, as is most certainly the case, surely it must be a matter of the utmost consequence, to cultivate that temper and disposition, which not only our BIBLES, but even REASON and CONSCIENCE, assure us, is indispensibly necessary to our happiness. But how is this to be done without time for serious recollection, or some regular seasons of retirement from the business and amusements of the world?

It is clear then, that a steady, constant, warm attention to religious exercises, is every way becoming our rational and immortal natures, and an essential part of our duty. And if our obligations here are thus founded in reason, conscience, and the word of GOD, certainly it is not in the power

of vicious dissipation and thoughtlessness, or the most obstinate infidelity, however stupifying for the present, to set them aside, or even lessen their authority.

Let us confine our thoughts, at present, more particularly, to the great duty of PRAYER, as in some sense comprising all the other duties of devotion; for, where that is performed with proper spirit and temper, the rest will not be omitted. And what is prayer, but an humble acknowledgment of our dependance on the great and blessed God, and devotion to his will? Or a religious expression of that regard, which is due from us, as reasonable and dependent creatures, to the supreme majesty and goodness of our Creator? A duty therefore highly reasonable in itself, and as highly beneficial to us.

Prayer, as directed and assisted by the
light

light of the sacred oracles, is a natural means of leading us into the knowledge of the perfections, providence, and grace of GOD, the most useful acquaintance with ourselves, and with that world where we are to have our everlasting abode. The constant practice of it, tends to fix an habitual awe upon our passions, and check their irregularities, spiritualize our affections, and inspire us with the ambition of a character, and the hope of an happiness, becoming the high rank of intelligent and immortal beings.

“Pray’r ardent opens heav’n, lets down a stream

“ Of glory on the consecrated hour

“ Of man, in audience with the Deity.

“ Who worships the great God, that instant joins

“ The first in heav’n, and sets his foot on hell.”*

By prayer we lay hold on the Almighty strength, and make the Most

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High

* Night Thoughts.

High our refuge ; and thus possesses that grace that tends to keep our minds in perfect peace, amidst a thousand tumultuous and distracting cares ; administers consolation in the greatest sorrows ; animates us in the face of the greatest difficulties ; guards us against temptation ; confirms all our good resolutions ; nourishes the principles of virtue ; and secures to us real felicity in time and eternity. Nor can there be any^b of the delights and joys of life so absolutely in our power, as to render this kind of regard to the DEITY unnecessary, however the heart intoxicated with vanity, may be inclined to think so ; because we still depend upon the divine pleasure for the continuance of our happiness. He that humbles the proudest kings, and beggars the richest nations, whenever he pleases, though he may at present set us out of the reach of all apparent danger, can, in a moment, change the scene, and plunge

us into the depths of human wretchedness.

By prayer, we do not pretend to give any kind of information to the all-knowing GOD, or make any alteration in his perfect and unchangeable mind, which indeed is impossible.—We consider it only as a natural and becoming manner of expressing our dependence upon him; and as a rational and an appointed medium of deriving, from his beneficence, the grace and mercy we need. It means that we believe the reality and œconomy of his providence, and that in this way we expect to receive the “blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the GOD of our salvation.”

Nor can it surely be justly thought any *meannefs*, in the greatest and most exalted creature on earth, to become an humble suppliant at the throne of that BEING, whose glory is above the heavens, whose majesty strikes the highest angels

angels with the profoundest awe, and in whose sight all the kingdoms of the world, with all their riches, and power, and glory, are less than nothing and vanity ! No, there is, there can be nothing meant in such acknowledgments :—nothing for a creature that calls itself reasonable to hold in contempt :—nothing unbecoming the abundance of the rich, the power of the great, the gaiety of the young, who remember, what one would think it impossible ever to forget, that they live here as probationers for an hereafter, infinitely happy or miserable.

In a word, whoever believes a God, the moral governor of the world, and considers these things ; considers, the excellencies and perfections of God, the nature of man, the utility and advantages of prayer, must acknowledge it a most reasonable service, and a necessary means of his true happiness.

And this duty is so essential a part of,
what

what is commonly called natural Religion, so plain a dictate of conscience, so necessary for the support of the human mind, when awakened to a just sense of its condition, that not only Christians, Jews, Mahometans, but Heathens also*, even the most wicked and abandoned of mankind, who have not lost all sense of a DEITY, when they find themselves in extreme distress, or under the apprehensions of immediate ruin, are led by a kind of moral instinct to seek the aids and consolation of some power above them, and to lay hold on his mercy by prayer, as their last resort, their only remaining asylum. Their common notion of an Almighty Being, the parent of the universe, and their sense of danger, prompt them to such acknowledgments of his providence,

* There are very pertinent and striking samples in antiquity of the Heathen devotion. The one in Simplicius's Commentary on Epictetus, page 297. The other the Hymn of Cleanthus to Jupiter.

dence, without any reflections on the more particular reasons and grounds of their duty. And what such unhappy creatures do thus occasionally, and from the mere impulse of nature, we should do constantly, from rational conviction, and settled principles of religion.

But however constant, sincere, and fervent, you are in the exercise of *private* devotion, my dear friend, let not that satisfy you; but, as you have opportunity, make conscience of paying the same serious attention to *public*. It is true, this branch of duty to the Most High, is now growing too much out of use, and looked upon, by the unthinking, as a matter of very little consequence.—The infidel sneers at a regular and constant regard to the public institutions of religion, as a sure indication of a weak, bigotted, superstitious mind; and the lukewarm believer is glad to find an excuse to indulge himself in the neglect of them: but
surely

surely if there be a GOD, and any religious homage or respect at all due to him, as certainly there is, reason will tell us it ought to be made a social concern.—Our social natures, wants, privileges, enjoyments, all call upon us to offer up our united acknowledgements, prayers and praises to Him as to our common Father, Benefactor, and LORD.—This is one principal medium, by which the spirit of private devotion is nourished and maintained in its true life and vigour.—And indeed, the very existence of religion itself in our world, with which the happiness of mankind, their social and individual happiness in both worlds, is so particularly and inseparably connected, depends very much upon the public exercises of its duties;—By this means the glorious doctrines, the holy precepts, the animating promises, which lie at the foundation of all true piety and virtue, are brought to our remembrance, their

their excellency and importance displayed, and a due regard to them urged upon our consciences; and all under the advantage of a divine appointment, and the assurance of the divine presence and blessing if we will believe our BIBLES. Accordingly we are exhorted and commanded, “not to forsake the assembling
“of ourselves together, but to worship
“the LORD in the beauties of holiness,
“to call upon him and praise his name
“together.”—Hence the truly wise, in all ages of the world, have admired and practised the duties of public worship, and with one voice have declared their abundant excellency and utility. And the more attentively and seriously you consider the subject, in the light in which reason and conscience, as well as the BIBLE, set it, the more clearly you will see the futility and danger of listening to the voice of prejudice against public religion, however supported by specious pretences

LETTER IV, 45

tences to better knowledge and taste, or
the authority of great names, and the
power of fashionable example.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER V.

To the same. In Continuation.

BUT, my dear sir, that the pious intercourse with the Almighty Father, recommended in my last, may be maintained consistently with your condition, as a SINNER against him, and your prayers be heard with acceptance, let all be done “ in the name of the LORD “ JESUS ;” *i. e.* let all be accompanied with a deep sense of your unworthiness, and an humble penitent trust in CHRIST, as opening a “ new and living way ” to your hope “ by his blood.” I cannot here enter into a formal proof of this doctrine * ; but I should be wanting in friendship to your best interest, for which I have professed so much concern in the rest of these letters, if I did not recommend it to your devout consideration and

* See more, Letter X.

and study, as you will find represented in your BIBLE, especially the New Testament. With a conscience purified by a vital faith in the atoning efficacy of the Redeemer's precious blood, and a sense of the forgiving mercy of God that way manifested, you will find unutterable pleasure in a constant course of devotional exercises; draw nigh to the supreme Majesty, and contemplate his perfections with the true spirit of adoration; love and confide in him, as your gracious Father; and be enabled to maintain your Christian character with solid satisfaction to your own heart, and just dignity in the eye of the world.

It is true, this way of coming unto God, and fixing your hope of acceptance with him, is condemned by some as unnecessary and irrational; a piece of mere puritanical absurdity. And I readily confess it is so intirely out of the sphere of human reason as not to be disco-

discoverable by any exercise of its powers that we know of, and therefore matter of *pure, supernatural*, REVELATION; yet when revealed, and as it is revealed in our BIBLES, it appears so necessary to the honour of the divine government; so worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness; so suited to the condition of guilty depraved creatures, such as we all are; that our reason, upon an unprejudiced consideration and real understanding of it, cannot but approve and rejoice in it. The presumptuous pride of reason, is, by this means indeed, laid low in the dust, but all its humble serious enquiries about the divine friendship, and all its most enlarged desires after it, are abundantly satisfied.—Without a *supernatural*, or special REVELATION, we have nothing to depend upon for our pardon and restoration to the favour of the Deity, but that general benignity or mercy we perceive in his works of creation and providence; which, whether

ther it *will*, or, indeed, consistently with his other perfections, and the ends of his government, *can*, be so far extended towards us, even supposing our sincere repentance, it is utterly impossible, from any principles of reasoning, discoverable by us in the book of nature only, fairly to conclude. Reason itself will tell us, that our repentance, though ever so sincere, and in other respects allowed to be ever so proper a qualification for mercy, is not that perfect obedience which we owe to our Maker ; nor can do any thing towards repairing the dishonour done to the divine government by our sins. Mere uncertain guesses, attended with perplexing darkness and distressing fears, is all that reason, without farther assistance can possibly afford in this important case. At her oracle it is in vain to expect a satisfactory answer to that most serious and interesting enquiry, “ What shall I do to be saved ? ” and the higher ad-
E vances

vances we make in the knowledge of GOD, his perfections and government, and of our own nature, its defilement and guilt; the more numerous will be our difficulties; the more uncertain our hopes; and the more afflicting our fears.

But when we look into the book of GOD, we find the clearest, strongest, assurances from himself of the placability of his nature, and that "there is indeed" "forgiveness with him for all sincerely" "penitent believers." There we see him sending his dearly beloved son from heaven, the faithful and true witness, to declare the glorious and delightful truth; and attest it in the most solemn and affecting manner; even by his most bitter and painful death. And what still more abundantly adds to the lustre and evidence of this truth, and gives the fullest satisfaction to the awakened mind, sunk down with the consciousness of its guilt and unworthiness, is, the farther assurance there
given

given, that this interposition of the Son of GOD is to be considered as that of a MEDIATOR and ADVOCATE, with respect to the Divine Justice ; and that his obedience, even to the death of the cross, in that character, is to be understood as a true and proper sacrifice of atonement to that justice for our sins ; a necessary and completely satisfactory acknowledgment to the Majesty of the Divine Government affronted by us, and the graciously appointed medium of leading us to sincere repentance and obedience, and rendering us acceptable to a just and holy GOD. Hence we read, that he “ puts away sin by the sacrifice of himself ; that “ we have redemption and remission of “ sins, are justified and have access to God “ by his blood ;” and that “ he gives repentance, and reconciles us to GOD.”

And indeed this great and glorious doctrine of an ATONING MEDIATOR, makes a capital and leading article, in

the BIBLE account of the religion of fallen man, and runs through every part of that gracious revelation, (though with different degrees of perspicuity) from the first promise made to our guilty parents in Paradise, to the last chapter of the sacred canon. And, so far as it has been discerned, has always been the first and last resort of every truly penitent sinner's conscience, in the great affair of pardon and acceptance with God.

Hence it is, that the name of CHRIST is so peculiarly delightful to the true Christian. He has seen and felt the evil of sin, and found deliverance from it ONLY HERE ;—HERE he rests his hope of forgiveness and eternal life, as on a sure foundation, the ROCK against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Having gained THIS ROCK, he breathes new air, feels new life and enjoyments ; looks down on earth and all her glories with a just contempt, and pants for heaven, and the immortal honours and felicities there.

there. He reads his BIBLE with peculiar pleasure, because he finds it full of the power and grace of his Redeemer. The history of providence, the institutions of religion, the doctrines and promises of eternal happiness, as there recorded, all refer to JESUS, as the beginning and end, the life and soul of the whole, the grand medium of all the dispensations of grace and mercy to mankind: "for no man has seen GOD at "any time," but as the Son reveals him; styled therefore, "the image of "the invisible GOD, the brightness of "glory." In the days of the patriarchs and prophets, under the Old Testament, he was the "angel of the divine presence," through whom the name of GOD, his power, majesty, mercy, as the GOD of grace and salvation, were manifested; though many of the peculiar glories of his person and office were still concealed under a veil of compa-

rative obscurity. But in the New Testament, this veil is drawn aside, and he stands forth in the full lustre of his sacred character, as the "Saviour of men; GOD" "manifest in their flesh; having all the" "fullness of the Godhead dwelling in" "him bodily. The mediator between" "GOD and man," whose interposition is of the highest consequence to our interest in the divine favour.

However the name of the LORD JESUS, therefore, may be abused by enthusiasts and hypocrites, to serve their vile purposes; the vicious infidel blasphemously deride it; or the cold disciple treat it with indifference; the real Christian will think on it with the most affectionate gratitude, and rejoice in it as the only name given under heaven for his salvation; the name of that most necessary, sincere, and amiable friend, who has redeemed him to GOD by his blood.

In a word, the sacred dignity of the person

person of CHRIST; his unparalleled humiliation; his most perfect obedience to the will of his Father; his fervour in devotion; his patience in suffering; his contempt of worldly glory; his ardent love of mankind; the manner and design of his death; the power of his resurrection; the heights of his exaltation, and the dominion he exercises over all creatures; his coming to dissolve the present frame of nature, and judge the world in righteousness; and the manifest tendency of the whole to restore true holiness and felicity to man:—These particulars, and many others of the like nature, which we find in our BIBLES, concerning this glorious personage constitute a CHARACTER of such universal perfection, grandeur, and importance, as must very sensibly strike every mind that has any just sense of moral excellency, any taste for true glory; but much more so when it is considered that with THIS

CHARACTER the Eternal Father is so infinitely WELL PLEASED, as to grant pardon and eternal life to all who pay a just regard to it; and, from the views of his mercy this way given, to inspire the sinner's heart with the deepest abhorrence of all sin, and the most animated love of universal righteousness, and consequently prevail on him to avoid the one and practise the other.

Be it therefore, my dear sir, your particular and most serious concern to entertain proper sentiments of CHRIST: to find his love shed abroad in your heart; to trust in him as your SAVIOUR, and obey him as your LORD.

I am very sensible, that were I writing to one of the gay, silly, unthinking young fellows, with which this age abounds, he would be ready, by this time, (and, perhaps, long before) to tell me—" If this be religion, which you have been describing in these letters; if such con-
tradiction

“tradition to the manners of the world,
“such retirement and devotion, public
“and private, and such regard to JESUS
“CHRIST and his laws, be necessarily
“implied in it, it must surely be a very
“gloomy melancholy thing, the very
“bane of all youthful pleasure, and even
“of all respectable figure and usefulness
“in the world.” I have, however, a better
opinion of your understanding and dis-
position, sir, than to imagine you would
talk in this stile, or allow yourself to
entertain such sentiments as these; and
yet you are not out of the reach of temp-
tation to do so; I would, therefore, ob-
serve, that tho’ it must be acknowledged,
enthusiasm and superstition, especially in
splenetic constitutions, have led too
many to give such representations of
religion, as really disgust the sensible and
terrify the weak, to the infinite prejudice
of its interest, and the true happiness
of mankind, always connected insepara-
bly

bly with it; yet that the scripture idea of it, such as I have endeavoured to give, cannot be fairly objected to as having any such tendency.—Here is nothing required of you as a duty, but what is every way becoming your reasonable and immortal nature; nothing forbidden, but what is indeed base and dishonourable; you are alarmed with no dangers, but what are real, and, if not prevented, will prove fatal; the promises made you are all faithful; and the blessings they contain, such as cannot fail of affording you endless felicity, if you sincerely believe them, and act agreeably.

And now, by way of conclusion to these two last letters, I beg leave to add, That with a mind thus enlightened and supported by faith and prayer, you will not only be able to withstand the most forceable temptations to vice; or if in some unguarded moment unhappily overcome, be restored to your integrity
and

and peace of mind ; but also to exhibit to those about you, a shining example of the most amiable virtue, the virtue of a sincere Christian ; such as, however the false wit of the vicious may incline them to ridicule, their sober consciences must always approve and venerate ; and which they will earnestly wish they had imitated, when the visionary enchantments of life are over, and they are really awakened, by the near approach of death, and its tremendous consequences ; and when they will find, by sad experience, the false pleasures of vice, exchanged for the real pangs of remorse ; their most spirited contempt of the divine displeasure, for the most heart-appalling fears of it ; and that immortality, which was originally designed as their greatest blessing, actually turned into the heaviest curse.— But, when the devout, the just, the temperate, the benevolent believer, will be enabled to reflect upon a life spent in the
the

the fear of GOD, the love of CHRIST, and real usefulness to men, with the highest consolation; and welcome with the sincerest joy, the approach of his dissolution, as opening to him the glorious, the transporting prospect of an endless existence in "his presence where" there is fulness of joy, and at whose "right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER VI.

To the same.

Young men exhort (σφοδρῶν) to be sober-minded.

PAUL to TITUS.

IT is possible, my dear friend, at the very time this letter is put into your hands, you may be deeply engaged in some of the gayer scenes of life, and your spirits all in a flow of the most delightful dissipation: if so, and you should happen to open it at so unseasonable a juncture, you may be struck very disagreeably with even the sight of my motto, and hastily conclude, that the contents must needs be a perfect contrast to the pleasures you are actually enjoying; and may, therefore, be rather inclined to treat me with some degree of resentment, as an impertinent intruder into your company, than freely open your heart to the serious and instructive enter-

entertainment I should here present you with,

But should this be the disposition of your mind, at the first view of things ; yet, when you come to retire, and your cooler reflections take place, I am persuaded you will think more consistently with your best interest, and give me, at least, a patient and fair hearing. If, therefore, you have run your eye down thus far, and are too much engaged to proceed properly, stop here, and put up the paper till the hour of retirement and reflection arrives ; but let it not be too long delayed,

True RELIGION and VIRTUE, however disgusting to the false taste that has always too generally prevailed amongst mankind, are most certainly the sources of innumerable delights, which, above all others, are adapted to the constitution and condition of the human nature ; and capable of giving it the most substantial,
refined,

refined, and exalted satisfaction. Wherever these divine principles are properly cultivated, and possess the heart indeed, they give a more pleasing relish to all the joys of prosperity, and disperse the darkness which otherwise hangs over the state of adversity. Under their government we may be happy, not only in the possession of great riches and honours, or when entertained with the sprightly wit of select companions, the splendor and politeness of public assemblies, or any other of the pleasing amusements of life: but happy too, (yea often ten thousand times more so in reality) when wandering alone in the solitary retreat, or when surrounded with the greatest dangers, sunk in the depths of temporal affliction, and even in the nearest and most certain views of death, and that awful tribunal, where we must be judged for eternity.

I am no enemy to the cheerful enjoyment

ment of the present life and world, or the use of the various mediums of pleasure indulgent providence puts into our power ; whether they appear in the simple dress of nature, or are improved and rendered still more exalted and elegant, by the refinements of art ; provided that enjoyment be regulated by reason and religion, the true fear of GOD, and the prevailing love and practice of righteousness ; and so, as not to impair that lively relish we should always preserve for the infinitely superior entertainments the gracious revelation of the gospel ensures to its obedient believers. I therefore heartily join in the sentiments of the wise king of Israel, who understood human nature, and knew the world as well as any man in it, and consequently was every way qualified to direct our taste and conduct ; where he says, “ Re-
“ joice, O young man, in thy youth,
“ and let thy heart cheer thee in the
“ days

“ days of thy youth ; walk in the ways
“ of thine heart, and in the sight of
“ thine eyes ; but know thou, that for
“ all these things GOD will bring thee
“ into judgment.” Which is as much
as if he had said in our stile and manner,
“ You may, my young friend, freely
“ use the bounties of providence, and
“ enjoy yourself in the world as long as
“ possible ; but be sure always take care,
“ that neither the nature nor the mea-
“ sure of your enjoyment be inconsistent
“ with your relation and duty to the
“ Supreme Being; and your interest in
“ another world. Let your freest plea-
“ sures be always over-ruled by the dic-
“ tates of true piety, the fear and love of
“ GOD, and the consciousness of your
“ own dignity, as a reasonable and im-
“ mortal being ; now in a state of pro-
“ bation, anon in a state of inconceivable
“ bliss or woe, according as you behave
“ properly or improperly here.”

7

We have no occasion to be sad, in order to be serious. Unless we actually enjoy the good things our heavenly Father bestows upon us, we shall not be capable of answering the ends of his beneficence in bestowing them; such as the animating our gratitude to him, improving our minds in true virtue, and extending our usefulness to our fellow creatures. The joyless must be thankless, cold, unbenevolent; and often discontented, morose, injurious; but still, we ought never to loose sight of the rules of temperance, and the solemn account we are to give to our benefactor at last. We may *live*, yet not as those who forget that they have *another* world to live in, where our condition must take, at least, its general complexion, from the sentiments and affections that governs us in this; but live as MEN, who know they are living for eternity; and, which adds infinite weight to the argument,

ment, live as CHRISTIANS, who profess to believe, they owe the enjoyment of the innocent delights even of this life, and the hope and expectation of what is infinitely better in the life to come, to the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of GOD. Live, therefore, not to ourselves, in sensuality and worldly lust, but to our Redeemer, in grateful obedience and love.

It is extremely dangerous, and shews a culpable degree of temerity, to pursue the phantom pleasure, to the utmost limits of virtue; when, therefore, any indulgence to which we are solicited, appears in the least doubtful, it must be wisest and best to determine on the side of forbearance. The curious niceness of jesuitical casuistry, however it may satisfy our consciences while blinded by corrupt prejudices, and the glare of false happiness, will afford us a poor consolation, when our eyes come to be

opened indeed, by the near approach of death, and the light of the eternal world.

Pleasure and danger are not only closely connected, but often so blended together, and the latter so deeply concealed under the appearance of the former, as to require more attention than usually falls to the share of unexperienced youth, without frequent admonitions, to discern the difference, and form a right judgment of their duty and interest; at least, with that clearness and precision that is necessary. You will do well therefore, my friend, in this case, to hearken attentively to the voice of more experienced reason; and that will tell you, that when you find the warmth of your heart in favour of this world's delights grow violent, and the pulse of sensible enjoyment beat high, it is more than time to be alarmed. There is a season for innocent gaiety, and a season for seriousness; take

take care, the first be not held out too long, nor return too often ; or the latter cut too short, and return too seldom. A great deal, as to the rectitude of your sentiments and conduct, in every respect, depends upon your management here. Chearfulness of heart it is indeed our duty, if possible, to maintain ; but when it degenerates into down-right levity, it becomes our sin. Seriousness is the opposite to this levity, and a proper guard against it.—That seriousness, I mean, which arises from religion, and is accompanied with its blessed hopes ; and not that dejected sadness and melancholy which arises from bad temper, bodily disease, or a superstitious imagination, which too often bears the name of seriousness, and passes for such amongst the weaker sort of well-meaning people. This indeed may banish from the heart all sinful levity, but establishes nothing better in its stead, nothing but what is

as inconsistent with the great duties of contentment, hope, and joy in God, as even levity itself; and which, being so often indulged by the religious, has been the means of prejudicing many against religion itself, and led them to conceive it as the bane of all enjoyment. This gloominess of soul, therefore, we should set ourselves to oppose, with all our might, by often reflecting upon its deformity, constantly checking its first approaches, and diligently cultivating the contrary disposition. And, to the same end, should make a careful use of those spiritual means which the blessed gospel furnishes us with, as well as those natural ones, which reason and providence throw in our way; the one to preserve the purity and peace of our consciences, and the other to maintain the exhilarating vigour, and generous flow of the animal spirits, on which the operations of the mind, and particularly the combinations
and

and modes of its ideas, and consequently its satisfaction and chearfulness, greatly depend.

We are commanded, indeed, by the great author of our religion, to "deny" ourselves, and take up our cross. "But these, and the like precepts, are by no means designed to prohibit the natural, regular, and temperate use, of such delights, as providence puts it into our power to enjoy ; but the unnatural, irregular, and intemperate only ; and to dispose us to resign these delights chearfully to the will of God, the interest of religion, and our better hopes, whenever he calls for such instances of our obedience. The duty of a Christian, in this case, does not lie in a voluntary humility, and superstitious mortifications ; but in governing his appetites and restraining them from all excesses ; in cherishing the most lively gratitude to his divine benefactor, and improving the blessings he enjoys, to

his glory and good of mankind. Not in creeping and skulking into corners to hide himself from the notice of the world; but in living in the face of it, with an exemplary superiority, to all undue influence from it; living under the power of redeeming love, and the hope of eternal life and glory,

But still it must be acknowledged, where the means and opportunities of worldly pleasures are possessed, temptations to a criminal self-indulgence, levity, and dissipation of thought, are not wanting; into these, therefore, we are commonly in far greater danger of falling, than into the extreme of seriousness, or too deep concern about spiritual things; and are often too ready to look upon the just degree of it I am pleading for, if not as a real deformity of mind, yet as altogether unnecessary, and consequently to be avoided rather than cultivated. And yet, without it, it is impossible we should
be

be truly wise, or really happy ; *i. e.* be able to keep this world at its due distance from our hearts, or manage the important interest we have in another, with due attention and success. Here, therefore, many of those calamities, to which we are liable, are of eminent service ; they call in our dissipated thoughts, over-awe the trifling powers of imagination, and fix the too volatile spirits of the mind (if I may use such an expression) and oblige us to reflect,—Vanity, with all her enchanting castles, is driven away, as feathers before the wind.—Reason resumes her authority, and religion pours in her succours to support it.—We think closely, deeply, justly ; in one word, we are serious.—But though the afflictive dispensations of providence have their use, and are sometimes necessary, to dispose us to be truly serious ; yet, blessed be GOD, we have many other gentler means of it, particularly the attentive consideration

deration of our mortality, and the representations he has made of himself and his relation to us, of his grace and mercy in CHRIST JESUS and of our future state. But these must be the subjects of other letters. In the mean time,

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER VII.

To the same. In Continuation.

NOW, my good friend, agreeably to what I hinted in the close of my last, let us suppose ourselves taking an amusing walk in our church-yard, amongst the graves of our deceased friends and neighbours.—Is it possible to think here and not be serious?—Here, where we see before our eyes the solemn ruins of human nature, the desolating effects of sin in our world, and the sad tokens of the divine displeasure against it! Here, where the king of terrors sits in triumph with the spoils of his tremendous power, and his victories around him! * Here, where all is real, and expressed with the utmost clearness and propriety;—where truth is taught us by indisputable

* Thron'd on the ruin of terrestrial things,
He sits, and triumphs on the dust of kings.

OLIVIER'S Day of Judgment.

table facts, the silent language of which pierces the heart with an energy, superior far to all the powers of rhetoric exerted by the most animated orator!—Here, in characters of various form and size, but all equally intelligible, are written, “The
“ sin of man—The righteousness of God
“ —The power of death—The worth of
“ time—The vanity of the world—The
“ necessity of a SAVIOUR.”—Lessons these, of infinite importance; and such as, if attended to properly, would dispose us to think more seriously and justly of ourselves, and make a more rational estimate of human life, than we commonly do. To all which I may properly add what our BIBLES farther teach us (viz.) that though here is seemingly, yet not really, the end of mankind; they still exist, still live, think, feel.—Here indeed is the full period of our TIME, and all our apparent connections with it; but where time ends, ETERNITY begins.—These
scenes

scenes of death naturally lead us to the contemplation of immortal existence which the deathless spirit has already entered upon, and in which the body itself shall share; "for this mortal must put on immortality, and death be swallowed up of life."

Here, therefore, we stand as it were between both worlds, the past and the future.—If we look back to the PAST, we see these carcases, or their dusty relics, once actuated by vital intelligent powers;—just such thinking, busy creatures, as ourselves; and some of them, perhaps, like too many of us, without any heart impressing thought of what they now are; solicitously engaged, with all the gust of longing expectation and hope, in the pursuit of false and delusive happiness.—Death comes in some unlooked for hour, and consigns over their bodies to the powers of corruption, and sends their immortal spirits to God, the judge

judge of all.—If we look forward to the FUTURE, we see, on the other hand, the dreadful state of desolation and despair, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* Misery to which we can fix no period.

“ A

* Some may be ready to object to these descriptions of terror, as puritanical and unnecessary, tending to give religion a shocking appearance, &c.—But certainly, God is just as well as merciful: and has taught us, both by his word and providence, to consider sin as offensive to him, and the the punishment of it as essential to his moral government;—To fear evil is natural, and a part of our constitution; and as that punishment is the greatest of all evils, it is most of all the object of fear.—God himself often addresses our fears, as one means of awakening our concern to avoid that evil. Mere slavish fear, indeed, is not true religion, yet it is often the means of leading our attention to it. And, therefore, says the apostle, “ knowing the terrors of the LORD, we persuade men.” The goodness of God, indeed, it is that properly leads us to effectual and saving repentance; but that we may be awakened to a due notice of that goodness, we are told, that God “ will render tribulation and wrath

Abominable, unutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd*.

On the other hand; the bright and blisful state, where the Almighty has fixed his eternal throne, and where he displays, in light ineffable, all the knowable excellencies of his nature, the majesty of his government, and the riches of his grace; and thereby felicitates myriads of glorious creatures transformed into his likeness, and filled with its fulness.

“ There rich variety of joy
Continual feasts the mind;
Pleasures which fill, but never cloy,
Immortal and refin'd.

No cloud those blisful regions know,
For ever bright and fair;
For sin, the source of mortal woe,
Can never enter there.

* Milton's Paradise Lost.

There

LETTER VII. 81

There no alternate night is known,
Nor sun's meridian ray;
But glory, from the sacred throne
Spreads everlasting day*.

To one or the other of these, awfully different abodes, we have reason to believe, every spirit, that once inhabited the several respective systems of dust here repositied, is now gone!—And thus, my friend, it must soon be with you and me.—Our bodies be thus reduced to this low state of inglorious wretchedness; and our spirits shine in this heaven, or sink into the darkness of that hell! So nearly and deeply interested are we in these scenes of mortality and their consequences! How serious! How alarming the consideration!

You will, perhaps, be ready to say, very true,—“ But these are particulars

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“ so

* Poems by THEODOSIA.

“ so familiar to our observation, and so
“ trite by being the perpetual subjects
“ of harangues with the moralists and
“ divines of every age, that one is even
“ weary in attending to them.—They
“ loose all their power of instruction, and
“ make no impression upon the heart.”

I allow this is too much the case; but are they really the less important for this?—Though all men die, and all men talk of it, is our concern in it the less worthy of our attention? Or will a death in our sins be a jot the less terrible and painful for our not thinking of it before? Surely not. Let us therefore, notwithstanding all the false maxims, the business and pleasures of the world; and while health and reason, and the means of grace, are continued to us, let us endeavour so to
“ number our days, that we may, indeed,
“ apply our hearts to wisdom;” the wisdom, not of this world, any farther than what relates to our duty, in it, but
of

of that which is to come, where our most interesting affairs lie.—The wisdom, therefore, which consisteth in the right knowledge of GOD, his perfections and government;—the dignity and depravity of our natures, and the way of our salvation by CHRIST; and this attended with sincere repentance, self-denial, a just contempt for all merely sensual enjoyments, submission to the laws and providence of GOD, and hope in his mercy. Wisdom not only in theory, but also in practice, which only, indeed, is worthy of the name. For knowledge alone, however clear and comprehensive, even in respect of religion itself, if not accompanied with a suitable practice, is, in fact, the greatest folly; as it renders our conduct the more inexcusable, sets the evil of it in a stronger light, and compels us to reflect upon it with the more painful sensibility. And yet, in this merely speculative, uninfluencing

G 2 knowledge

knowledge, we are extremely apt to rest. It is even distressing to see men, who make a great shew of pious zeal about the doctrines of Christianity ; who stand upon the most punctilious strictness of interpretation, where the BIBLE gives the greatest latitude ; and who judge, even with the most uncandid severity, about the right of their fellow Christians, to an interest in the common Saviour, and the privileges of his house.—I say, it is even distressing to see, how destitute these men often are of a real influential belief of the gospel, and a practical regard to its most essential and distinguishing duties ; and particularly to that charity, benevolence, and contempt of this world, it so strongly recommends both by precept and example. And how many others are there amongst the common sort of professing Christians, who read the history and doctrines of CHRIST, his incarnation, sufferings, and death for sinners ;

ners; hear them opened to their understandings, and applied to their consciences, with all possible faithfulness and energy in the sacred ministry; and who even acknowledge these things to be of the utmost consequence to their happiness in another world; and yet, after all, pay no practical regard to them, but live and die as if they had no more concern in them than the beasts that perish! They may, and many of them do, carry the name of Christian to the remotest parts of the earth; but, at the same time, carry with them such a train of enormous vices, as shock even the most savage heathens.

And this amazing neglect of vital Christianity, is, I fear, a growing evil; the rich are too much intoxicated with the grandeur and pleasures of the world; those in the middle stations of life, too much involved in the business of it; and the very poor, too much over-run with

idleness and ignorance, to attend to any thing that requires so much inward retirement, and serious reflection, as the affairs of religion most certainly do.

But however common and prevailing this spiritual stupidity may be, it is not at all the less irrational, wicked, dangerous.—However great or many they are, who dare to laugh at the fear of God, slight the messages of his mercy, and trifle with an everlasting world, they cannot alter the nature of things ; cannot confine their own existence within the narrow limits of time, or dissolve the eternal obligations of religion and virtue ; cannot annihilate their own guilt, reverse the judgment of God, or quench the flames of ever-burning ruin.—There is a REALITY in these things, which the imaginations of men could not give, nor can they possibly take away.—Reason, scripture, conscience, assure us, with irresistible certainty, that we do indeed live here
for

for an eternity of happiness, or misery inconceivably great. How vain the attempt to invalidate such evidence! How foolish to oppose the force of truths that must and will, after all, prevail! But here, my dear sir, I leave you, for the present, to your own reflections, intending to pursue the subject in my next, which shall soon follow.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

To the same. In Continuation.

BESIDES what has been already hinted,
—The discoveries the great and
blessed GOD has been pleased to make of
himself and his relation to us, in his holy
WORD, with which our consciences, if
not to the last degree blinded and stupi-
fied, will always take part, have a most
natural and powerful tendency to fill
your mind, my friend, with a variety of
sentiments the most grand, important,
and delightful that can be conceived;
and consequently, at once, dispose you to
a serious cheerfulness of heart, and guard
you against the infatuating dangerous in-
fluence of false pleasure.—In that divine
book, we are taught to think of GOD, as
the greatest and best of BEINGS; pos-
sessed of every awful and amiable perfec-
tion; as always present with us, obser-
ving in a manner peculiar to himself, not
only

only our outward actions, but the inmost thoughts of our hearts; all the principles and motives upon which we act, and the ends at which we aim;—for, as an elegant writer expresseth it,

*His glance like lightning looks all nature through;**

and this, not as an unconcerned spectator, but as a father, able and ready to assist us in all our difficulties, and comfort us in all our distresses;—and, as a judge, self authorized and determined to fix our characters and our portion for eternity, upon the principles of our moral truth, equity, and goodness.

Now it is, I think, utterly impossible, to consider ourselves in this situation, thus surrounded with the DEITY, thus
 “ living, moving, and having our being
 “ in him; thus seeing him who is invi-
 “ sible, setting him always before us;”
 and, at the same time, consider his cha-
 racter

* OSILVIE'S Day of Judgment.

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rafter as our Father and Judge, without feeling our hearts inspired with some degree of humble confidence and hope, reverence and awe ; or, in other words, without that cheerfulness and sobriety I am pleading for. But still more particularly, in the BIBLE, the Eternal Father points us to Jesus Christ his Son, and addresses us in language to this effect ;—

“ Behold, what manner of love I have
 “ bestowed upon you, in appointing my
 “ dear son, in whom I am well pleased,
 “ to be my salvation to the ends of the
 “ earth, the light and the life of men!—
 “ See him not only becoming incarnate,
 “ a man of sorrows, and acquainted with
 “ grief ; but even dying upon a cross,
 “ bearing the sins of many, and making
 “ an everlasting atonement for them!—
 “ Him I have raised from the dead, and
 “ set at my own right-hand, a Prince
 “ and a SAVIOUR, to give repentance
 “ and remission of sins ; so that whoso-
 “ ever

"ever amongst you, believes in him,
 "with a penitent and obedient heart,
 "shall not perish, but have everlasting
 "life;—but he that believeth not, but
 "slights this testimony of my goodness
 "or obstinately opposes, or slothfully
 "neglects, the saving mercy thus ten-
 "dered him, shall not see life, but die
 "in his sins, and suffer the pains of ever-
 "lasting destruction from my presence."
 —And can any thing in the world be
 more or better adapted to awaken our
 fears, encourage repentance, inspire us
 with hope, and engage our grateful af-
 fections, and our whole hearts to God;
 or make us truly serious, than such de-
 clarations as these?—As sinners, we are
 condemned already*, the "wrath of
 "GOD abideth on us," as the BIBLE
 assures us (awful assurance!) But through
 the divine goodness, and the interposi-
 tion of Jesus, it is not wrath to the ut-
 termost

* John iii. 18, 36.

termost ;—we are yet in a state of reprieve and trial, have the means of deliverance in our hands, and a thousand motives to urge us to the diligent use of them, and particularly many gracious promises and assurances of success.—Life and death, mercy and judgment, heaven and hell, call upon us to flee from the impending ruin, and lay hold upon the hope set before us ; and, surely, such monitors as these cannot be heard with indifference, by creatures in such circumstances as we are ! If they can, we must be under the most monstrous and shocking infatuation !—However large the promises, however weighty the arguments, therefore, on the side of sinful pleasure may be, and how strongly soever they may strike the lower powers, of our nature, or the corruption of the higher ; yet, when compared with the pleas of a never-dying conscience, an Almighty God, and a most gracious

ous Redeemer, they are lighter than the smallest atom of dust, thrown into the balance against the whole material world.

The man, therefore, that thinks like a man, made sensible of his real condition and danger, his true interest and happiness, must and will, readily embrace the gospel revelation, and rejoice in it, as a scheme every way glorious to the divine perfections, and every way necessary and salutary to the human nature.—Religion, the religion of JESUS, where all is magnificent, amiable, and interesting to the highest degree, will be his perpetual and delightful study. Instead of devoting himself, his time, his thoughts, intirely to the concerns of this life, or wasting them in unsatisfying and trifling pleasures, as he sees the bulk of mankind do; he will endeavour to rouse the powers of his soul, and get them impressed with a sense of the excellency and importance

importance of the promises and institutions of CHRIST; converse daily with his BIBLE, his conscience, his GOD, and the invisible world; and be particularly careful to indulge himself in no pleasures inconsistent with the regard due to these great things—in none, but what, if death should, as it most certainly may, overtake him in the midst of them, he may have no rational ground for confusion and fear.

This perhaps, you will say, is more then SERIOUS, it is SEVERE*.—But I trust, when you reconsider it, it will appear no more than what highly becomes our condition, as probationers for eternity

* Is joy the daughter of severity?

It is—Yet far my doctrine from severe.

Night Thoughts.

It is said of Grotius, who was so justly famed for his great learning and wisdom, that being asked by a friend, how he might lead his life to the greatest advantage, replied—Be SERIOUS.

eternity, and bound to the fear of GOD, not only by the ties of his indisputable authority, but also of his redeeming mercy ; and such, indeed, as is necessary for the maintaining that just tranquillity of mind, in which a great deal of the true felicity, even of this life, consisteth. For, by this means, we are still free to pursue every innocent, reasonable, and manly delight, without exposing ourselves to any of those foreboding fears, and heart-sinking reflections, which always, more or less, must attend an indulgence in licentious and guilty pleasures.

And if, with this rational temperance, steadily persisted in, we are enabled to maintain fervent piety and benevolence ; preserve the sensibility of our consciences, and a capacity of relishing, with vital pleasure, the excellencies of genuine religion, and the love of GOD ; we have great reason to hope, that a solid cheerfulness

fulness of heart will be preserved to us, through all the vicissitudes of this world, whether prosperous or adverse ; and that in our last moments the light of the divine countenance will be, lifted up upon us, illuminate even the shadow of death, and spread an inviting glory over the awful gulph of eternity ; so that we may not only think of our dissolution without fear, but even meet it with earnest, though patient, desire, in the delightful assurance of an everlasting deliverance from all sin and misery, and the full possession of the most perfect felicity, promised us by the GOD that cannot deceive ; a felicity unappalled by enjoyment, unwasted by duration.

In a temper thus formed, in thoughts thus exercised, in the belief and contemplation of such great, interesting, and glorious truths, there is something that naturally tends to furnish our minds with the most proper materials for agreeable
and

and delightful self-reflection ; to animate us to the discharge of every duty, and produce in us that virtue and happiness, I mean by serious cheerfulness. To enter therefore into the spirit of these things, to feel their divine power, and governing influence upon our hearts, should be our great concern, and will be so, if we think justly*.

But to this end we should not only read and reflect, but make it also our particular and solemn business at the throne of grace, to implore that assistance of the divine Spirit, which the corruption and imbecility of our natures have rendered so greatly and indispensibly necessary, and which our heavenly Father has

H intimated

* Thus a great Philosopher of the Heathen World; Neque enim ita generati a natura sumus, ut ad ludum et jocum facti esse videamur : sed ad severitatem potius, ut ad quædam studia graviora atque majora.

intimated his readiness to bestow upon all that sincerely and constantly seek it: an intimation indeed highly encouraging; but because liable to be trifled with and abused, through inattention, and intemperate love of this world, is also of a very serious nature. Accordingly the apostle has expressed our dutiful regard to it, in language more than barely serious, where he says,—“ Work
“ out your own salvation with fear and
“ trembling; for it is GOD that worketh
“ in you to will and to do of his good
“ pleasure. And having received a kingdom that can never be moved, let us
“ have grace, whereby we may serve
“ GOD acceptably, with reverence and
“ godly fear; for our GOD is a consuming fire!”

To conclude, let us endeavour to keep a constant eye upon the grand period of all, when those mighty orbs, that now measure out the various portions of our
time

time by their amazing revolutions, shall number our days and years no longer ;—when the heavens themselves shall pass away as a scroll, and the earth and all things therein be burnt up ;—when the CHRIST that once died upon a cross, in our world, shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, attended with ten thousands of his saints, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of GOD ;—and when he shall summon all the nations of the world, the living changed, and the dead restored to immortal life, by the word of his power, before his awful tribunal, there to try and judge their characters, and fix their portion for eternity ; finish the stupendous plan of providence, as it concerns our world, and gather all the events of its various revolutions into one grand point ; where infinite wisdom, power, righteousness, and goodness, will appear in the full blaze of divine glory ; the glory of the most complete and joy-

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ful salvation, to all the true friends of
GOD, and the most tremendous ruin to
all his enemies !

“ Great day, for which all other days were
made,

For which earth rose from CHAOS, man from
earth——

Great day of dread, decision, and despair !

At thought of thee, each sublunary wish

Lets go its eager grasp, and drops the world,

And catches at each reed of hope in heav’n,

At thought of thee !—And art thou absent
then ?

LORENZO ! No. ’Tis here—it is begun—

Already is begun the grand assize

In thee, in all ; deputed conscience scales

The dread tribunal and forestalls our doom ;

Forestalls ; and by forestalling proves it
true !—

Who conscience sent, her sentence will sup-
port ;

And God above, assert the God in man.”

With

With these striking beautiful lines of
Dr. YOUNG in his NIGHT THOUGHTS,
as suitable to what I was saying, and
much worthy of your notice, I take my
leave.

And am &c.

LETTER IX.

To Mr. J*** F***.

MAN *cometh up and is cut down like a flower!*——How elegant and striking the image! How serious and alarming the truth! Our young friend, EUSEBIUS, my dear sir, is now with us no more;—a violent disorder of the consumptive kind carried him off in a few weeks. But he died as he lived, a sincere believer; one who felt the power of the gospel in his heart, constraining him willingly to an holy life, and affording him the most solid consolations in the departing hour. He had no violent transports; but clear, serious views of a reconciled GOD, and an Almighty Redeemer, and consequently the most rational assurances of everlasting blessedness; such as afforded his mind the most placid,

placid, and yet sensible delight, and pierced all his friends with the most affecting convictions of the divine power of real Christianity, the doctrine of salvation through CHRIST crucified.

A little monument is erected for him, and this the inscription :

Here

Lies interr'd, what was mortal
Of the truly pious and benevolent

Mr. S. E,

Late of this town.

His amiable spirit

Left these remains

Sept. 17, 1760,

In the 26th year of his age,

In the chearful expectation

Of a resurrection

To an happy

Immortality.

The stile of the monument is *Simplex
Munditiis*, it I may so apply the words

of your favourite HORACE; and that of the inscription designed to correspond with it, as most agreeable to the modest turn of our friend's mind. Here is no swelling eulogium to impose upon posterity, and flatter the stranger into an opinion of virtue that never existed in the subject. The memory of THIS YOUTH, indeed, requires none of

The chissel's slender help to FAME,—*

which is generally the most laboured, where there is the least merit. The ideas of his virtues are engraven deep in a thousand hearts, and will live, at least, by tradition, as long as virtue has a soul in this neighbourhood to espouse her cause, or point out her distinguished votaries.

A profusion of praise is so common upon these occasions, and poured out so indiscriminately on the deserving and the undeserving, that no credit is to be given

to

* PARNELL.

to any of them, where other evidence is wanting. Too many, who have lived even infamous for their vices, and died without the least signs of repentance, have had their sepulchres decorated, not only with hieroglyphic ensigns of honour, but also with the more commonly intelligible memorials of eminent virtue; and their false tombs have declared them to be when dead, what they neither were, nor wished to be, when living.

Untruth at all times is abominable, but uttered in these circumstances, by the mouth of the grave, and in the face of the eternal world, it is ten thousand times more so.—This is to employ the awfully silent tongues of the dead, to propagate the most solemn lies, and countenance the living in their hypocrisy and wickedness;—to teach men, with an impious hardness of heart, to trifle with what ought to be treated with the most religious reverence.

Yet

Yet even this practice, bad as it is, serves to shew us, how connatural RELIGION and VIRTUE are to mankind, and how deeply their laws are written in their hearts, corrupt as they are. For thus they implicitly, though undesignedly, declare, that their consciences approve, what their lives condemn (viz.) that in fact, virtue is more honourable than vice, and religion than prophaneness; that what they reject with scorn, and as the disgrace of their characters in this world, they would be thought, when gone to the next, to have esteemed as their glory.

But how surprising is it, that men, who seem so anxious to possess the esteem of posterity, as to bear false witness, even in the very grave, for the sake of it, should, when living, pay no regard to that righteousness by which that estimation might have been much more certainly secured to them? Or that they
who

who seem to be concerned to escape the censures of man, which can only affect their memory here, should expose themselves so wilfully to the condemnation of Almighty GOD, which must give the most exquisite pain to their consciences hereafter ? But,

To return to our friend ; He was your intimate acquaintance from his earliest youth ; you was almost a daily witness of the purity, integrity, genuine humility, and real greatness of his mind.—How serious and unaffected, and yet how warm and lively his piety !—What a deep sense of the omnipresence of the DEITY ; what a reverence of his majesty, what chearful ideas of his goodness, and what strong feelings of his obligations to redeeming grace, he always carried about with him !—With what care and circumspection he guarded against every thing he thought offensive to the blessed GOD ! —What

—What rectitude of intention, justice, diffusive benevolence, and purity of manners, appeared through his whole life ! And yet how easy this singular and exalted piety and severity of morals sat upon him ! With what almost divine address he insinuated, and maintained, a sense of the amiableness of his character in the hearts even of the vicious, inspired them with a reverence for virtue, and almost persuaded them to practise it !—

How unhappy for us and the world, that we see this living, striking, example of real goodness no more amongst us ! No—That excellent spirit that once actuated the lifeless carcase now deposited in the silent tomb, converses with us no longer by those sensible mediums, which lately gave us such uncommon pleasure, and added so many real joys to the social life.—But though this is our very great affliction, it is his much greater felicity; for without calling in the aids of that
charity

charity which covers a multitude of sins, we may assuredly conclude he is gone to the "innumerable company of angels, "and the spirits of just men made perfect," where he enjoys the pleasures of the most pure and exalted friendship; and the light of that countenance that diffuses beatitude past utterance though the worlds of immortality.

The wintry blast of death,
Kills not the buds of virtue; no, they spread
Beneath the heav'nly beam of brighter suns,
Through endless ages into higher powers,

THOMSON.

You will, I trust, never forget how he loved you, and how solicitous he was to lead you into the path of life! How many, and how profitable the hours we have spent in his company! But these enjoyments are now no more;—"Yet, though dead he speaketh."—Methinks

I hear him now from the dark repository of his lifeless remains, adjuring us, by all the solemn terrors of the grave, the awful glories of the invisible world, and his high felicity in it ; the endearing memory of our past friendship, the frailty of the present life, the hasty approaches of death, the justice and mercy of GOD, the love of CHRIST, our fears, our hopes, and, in a word, by every thing sacred, serious, interesting in both worlds ; adjuring us, I say, that we make a just use of these dispensations of providence ; consider our latter end, and prepare to renew our acquaintance and friendship in the world of spirits.

Let it not suffice then, my dear sir, that we drop the friendly tear, and indulge the plaintive sigh over his grave, or even preserve the memory of what he was in our hearts ;—let us do what is infinitely more worthy of our friendship, more pleasing to his, perhaps, now observant spirit ;—LET US IMITATE HIS VIRTUES ! I am, &c.

L E T T E R X.

To the same. In Continuation.

THOUGH you have so often heard the sound of these serious words, DEATH and ETERNITY; yet in the full vigour of youth, flushed with uninterrupted health, and amused with the various scenes of business and pleasure, it is possible you may have heard them as sounds at a vast and unknown distance only, and, therefore, not so as to engage your serious attention, or make any deep and lasting impressions upon your heart.— This is the case of the generality; too much so even of the truly good.

Suffer me then, my dear young friend, to take the advantage of those impressions which the tidings in my last must have made upon your mind, to lead you into a serious contemplation of that great and interesting truth, which the divine providence now so solemnly reminds you of (*viz.*) — *that you also are mortal.*—

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I do not mean to fill your heart with chagrin and melancholy, but to lead you into such kind of reflections, as naturally tend to regulate and enlarge its enjoyments, and make you really happy in time and eternity too.

The science of dying, as SENECA in effect calls it*, however inconsistent with the pursuit and possession of false pleasure, is absolutely necessary to the true; and accordingly has engaged the attention and study of the wisest and best of men in all ages. It is a science of vast extent, and with the addition of the word WELL, comprises the whole of true philosophy, the proper wisdom of man. What SENECA knew but little of, but the true Christian, who enjoys that gospel which has brought life and immortality to light, fully understands. May you, my friend, understand it also!—

To

* Vivendi atque moriendi scientia.

SEN. de brev. vit.

To that end it is necessary to exercise your thoughts attentively and frequently upon it.—Remember then it is written in the book of the eternal decrees, the records of heaven, nor fear to have it written in your heart—YOU MUST DIE.—

But what is it to die ?—It is to suffer the execution of that sentence which the great GOD has passed upon all men, because they are sinners ; a sentence designed as a standing memorial of the rectitude and dignity of his government, and the justice and greatness of his indignation against the sin of man. It is at once to be cut off by an irresistible hand, from all the dearest and most interesting connections of this life, and plunged into that horrid darkness, which no mortal eye hath ever penetrated, and which is the eternal grave of all mortal glory.—The body, that appears now a divinely curious and animated system of flesh and blood, the medium of ten thousand de-

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lights

lights and pleasures, the object of our most affectionate attention and tender care, becomes a mere senseless carcase, a spectacle of offence and horror; is consigned to the gloomy repositories of the dead, there to dissolve into dust, or furnish a vile repast for the offspring of corruption.—The soul, still possessed of its powers of consciousness, finishes its state of trial, and enters upon that of retribution; exists in a new and unknown world, in a new and surprising manner, happy or miserable, past all utterance, all conception.

To die, therefore, must be a very serious thing indeed! So serious, that thousands, who think themselves extremely wise, dare not so much as think of it in earnest. The very mention of the word DEATH in their hearing, and the most distant reminders of their concern in it, fill them with distress and

and terror*. Some alarming apprehensions of it, however, will, at times, press in upon their hearts, in spite of all their efforts to the contrary, against which they have no remedy, but stupidity and dissipation; the noise and bustle of the world; a perpetual round of business or amusement at best, and too often of vice and wickedness. Just as if

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their

* Aye, but to die, and go we know not where ;
To lie in cold obstruſtion, and to rot ;
This ſenſible warm motion, to become
A kneaded clod ; and the delighted ſpirit
To bath in fiery floods, or to reſide
In thrilling regions of thick ribbed ice ;
To be imprifon'd in the viewleſs winds
Or blown with reſtleſs violence about
The pendent worlds ; or to be worſe than worſt
Of thoſe, that lawleſs and uncertain thought
Imagines howling.—'Tis too horrible !
The wearieſt and moſt loaded worldly life,
That pain, age, penury, imprifonment,
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

SHAKESPEARE

their not thinking of death, would be an effectual security against its power ; or, that its inevitable and tremendous consequences, the just judgment of God, and everlasting perdition, were, indeed, the inventions of priest-craft and superstition ; instead of the eternal purposes and unalterable appointments of infinite wisdom ; or, that they could be baffled and borne down by ignorant confidence, and the vain dreams of self-delusion.—What folly and madness is this !—A man with the assassin's dagger at his breast, may shut his eyes, and persuade himself there is no danger, because he does not see it, with far less degree of weakness and infatuation, than those unhappy creatures discover in their conduct ; for it is possible, that even then the murderer may relent, or be otherwise providentially prevented from executing his horrid purpose, but in their case, possibility of escape is not so much as supposable !

And

And if they cannot bear so much as to think of death without terror, how will they be able to meet it indeed!—If in their senses, and the due exercise of their reason and conscience, what crouds of terrifying ideas, must, in that case, pour in upon their minds, and harrow up their very souls!

You see then, my friend, the absolute necessity of some more effectual means of fortifying our minds against an event so every way inevitable, and so awfully interesting in its consequences; such as are consistent with a clear, just, rational view of the whole.—Mere conceit and bravado, an ignorant thoughtlessness, or blustering contempt of death, will not, can not, avail any thing at all, towards securing us from the evil of it.

'Tis not the stoic lesson got by rote,
The pomp of words and pedant dissertation,
That can support us in the hour of terror.

Books have taught cowards to talk nobly of it,
But when the trial comes they start and stand
aghast.

ANON.

If we would live above the fear of death indeed, and meet it with a fortitude that has its foundation in the reason and nature of things, or the divine constitution, it must be by living under the power of true religion. That is, by receiving and conforming to the dictates of the BIBLE; laying hold of the mercy of GOD in his Son; and putting our trust in him with a penitent and obedient faith. The contemplation of the greatness and infinitude of the gracious goodness and compassions of our heavenly Father to his creatures, as they stand displayed in the gospel scheme of religion, hath a most natural and powerful tendency to excite in us a comfortable hope, soften the stern visage of death, and illuminate the dark gulph
of

of eternity.—The doctrine of CHRIST crucified, is designed and adapted to speak divine peace to the penitent sinner's heart, and ensure him, upon the most solid, rational, and indubitable principles, of pardon and acceptance with GOD. It is called, therefore, the "word" of reconciliation, glad tidings of great "joy."—And whenever it is set home with power upon the conscience, not only gives us more exalted and enlarged ideas of the divine mercy, but removes the very foundation of those guilty fears that naturally possess our minds in a serious view of the awful Majesty and irresistible power of an offended GOD; and at the same time inspires us with the love of GOD and holiness, and produces that temper and disposition of mind, that reason tells us is necessary to qualify us for the enjoyment of the heavenly felicity.

Great stress, therefore, in the BIBLE, is laid upon a just regard to the

LORD JESUS CHRIST, his sufferings, death, and intercession; and upon looking for mercy through him. For he himself says, "Unless we eat his flesh, " and drink his blood," *i. e.* consider and receive him as a sacrifice for our sins, " we have no life in us; and that no " man can come unto the Father, but by " him." And the Apostles of JESUS say—that it is " Through his blood that " we have redemption, even the remission of sins;—boldness to enter into " the divine presence; and are justified " from all things—That he bore our sins " in his own body; was delivered for our " offences, and takes away our sins by " the sacrifice of himself."—Modes of expression plainly intimating, that the obedience and death of CHRIST is to be considered, as having, by the divine appointment and constitution, a particular effect in respect to the justice of GOD, and the œconomy of his government; and

and is, at the least, a medium through which GOD shews his mercy to us, and we are to expect a saving interest in it : or, that the divine father has a peculiar regard to the mediation of his Son, in all his dispensations of grace to sinful men, and particularly looks upon " his death upon the cross," as a proper sacrifice of expiation, offered to the honour of his rectoral wisdom and righteousness, and a necessary expedient to make way for his mercy to operate in our favour in consistency with these perfections. The reason is plain ; we are considered, " As " still under the law, requiring perfect " obedience" (under it, as a rule of life, though not as a medium of our title to everlasting happiness.) In the eye of this law, we must, after our best obedience and sincerest repentance, appear really guilty (as every man's own heart will tell him, more or less) and consequently condemned to suffer what the law threatens
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in that case; and therefore, in ourselves, intirely without hope. But here, to our unspeakable consolation, the blessed gospel comes in to our relief, and points us to a most glorious and all sufficient remedy; points us to Jesus, as “redeeming us from the curse of the law, by “being made a curse for us;” for which there would have been no occasion, if we had not been under the law, or could have pleaded innocence; and which strongly evinces, that the blood of CHRIST, by which we are so redeemed, must have a peculiar respect to the law and justice of the offended DEITY.

At the footstool, therefore, of this great Redeemer’s throne, not only the sinful publican, but the most righteous pharisee must seek the pardoning mercy of GOD, and trust there for deliverance from their guilt and its dreadful consequences, the “power of the grave.”

But let it be always remembered, with
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the utmost attention, that unless this so suitable, most reviving, and delightful discovery of the way of our acceptance with GOD, has its due degree of moral influence upon our minds;—unless it melt our hearts with penitent concern for our sins, inspire us with the unfeigned love of GOD and holiness, and be, in deed, “the incorruptible seed,” as the apostle calls it*, the seminal principle of a new and divine life in us, it will not, can not, in the least avail us in the hour of death, and before that tribunal, where we are to be judged for eternity. For this moral change, which our LORD calls being BORN AGAIN, and which springs from the powerful application of the gospel, the doctrine of CHRIST crucified, to our hearts, by the divine spirit, is as necessary to our enjoyment of eternal life, as the death of CHRIST itself, though in a different respect.—The future world of immortal blessedness, must be very diffe-

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* 1 Pet. i. 23.

rent from this, and its employments and pleasures infinitely refined and spiritual, pure and holy; and without a disposition and taste correspondent to them, cannot possibly be enjoyed;—to produce and cultivate this disposition, is one principal design of the gospel revelation and its grace; and the actual possession of it should be the grand concern and care of our lives.—To take occasion, therefore, from our confidence in the atonement of CHRIST, to indulge ourselves in any kind or degree of immorality, is to turn it to an account the intire reverse of that for which it was intended by the divine wisdom; is a most presumptuous and shameful abuse of the goodness of GOD; and a dreadful imposition upon our own souls. Faith, however orthodox and assured, if without works is dead, and of no more use in the business of religion and salvation, than no faith at all.—The faith to which the promises of forgiveness

ness and eternal life are annexed, is a vital operative principle, which, as the apostle expresseth it, "worketh by love,"—enables us to exercise a just government over ourselves, warms our hearts with affectionate devotion to God, and universal benevolence towards man.

Nothing but a consciousness of such a believing regard to the divine mercy, and such a use of it, can justly support us in the real views of death and an eternal world; but this will do it indeed, rationally and effectually.—He that has so felt the power of the gospel revelation as to lead him to sincere repentance and newness of life, and yet does not trust in these good things, but refers himself to the great MEDIATOR, for his pardon and acceptance with a just GOD, he has the sacred word of truth to assure him, that "though he die, he shall not perish," and strictly speaking, shall never die.—Death may separate his soul from
his

his body, but neither from his GOD.— Absent from the body, the deathless spirit shall be present with the LORD, and his very flesh rest in hope of a glorious resurrection to immortality. He has therefore nothing to fear from the king of terrors, but when, or wherever, and under whatever form, he meets him, may welcome him as a friend ; —the kind angel sent by his heavenly Father, to deliver him from a world of darkness, sin, and pain, and introduce him into that of eternal light, purity, and joy ; there to behold the face of uncreated excellence, transformed into his likeness, blest with his friendship, joining with myriads of happy immortals, in that divine song, so expressive of the triumphs and glories of redeeming grace,— “ O death where is thy sting ! O grave where is thy victory ! Death is swallowed up of life ! ”

Such is the hope of the truly righteous

ous, and such often his prospects and transports in death! Such, my dear friend, may you and I feel in that most serious and awful hour! Such we have reason to expect we shall feel, if we live now to our consciences and our God.

I am &c.

LET-

L E T T E R X I.

To * * * * *.

I Think, my dear fir, you know my neighbour * * * * *, he is commenced preacher; and wonderfully zealous he is in his way. Soon after you left us yesterday, and just as our friend ——— and I were got into earnest discourse upon the use and importance of reason in religion, he came to pay me a visit. I was, at first, sorry for his well meant compliment, as it happened at a time I was so agreeably engaged; but when I reflected upon the character and sentiments of my visitant, and considered he was a serious religious man, the warmth of whose affections had very much oppressed and confounded his reason, but that possibly he might be convinced of his mistakes by what we were discoursing of, I was really pleased. Accordingly, I told him our subject, and
hinted

hinted at some of the arguments we had been considering in favour of our opinion. He smiled with an air of self satisfaction, and told us, he thought, we were very much in the wrong, and our notions extremely dangerous to the interest of religion :—That for his part, he looked upon reason and the BIBLE as diametrically opposite :—That if a man would be a Christian indeed, he must not reason but believe, and become a fool, that he may know CHRIST, and be made wise to salvation :—That while men adhere so much to reason, they will never enter into the true and genuine spirit of Christianity, &c. &c.—We replied, and he rejoined, and so on ; but at last we found ourselves, on both sides, just where we were before. We had disputed, though eagerly, yet without any unfriendly and provoking warmth, and parted with mutual expressions of esteem and pity for each other.

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The man has many good qualities, and means well; and I could not help feeling a very sensible concern for him, after he was gone, which when I was alone, led me to reflect more particularly upon the subject we had been canvassing. Some of the chief of these reflections I here send you, my dear friend, and the rather, as I imagine that your part of the country abounds with a sort of people, who, however rightly they mean, seem to pay too great a regard to mechanical impulses, and unaccountable feelings, and too little to rational conviction in the concerns of religion; and consequently, that your tender mind, though so well established, may be exposed to some trials and difficulties, by the plausible zeal of those people.

The gospel of CHRIST is undoubtedly most admirably calculated to penetrate the heart, and is designed to do so; and when it does, it becomes the power of
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GOD to salvation;—the seminal principle of a new and divine life;—and it is impossible to find it such to ourselves, and have our minds brought under its governing influence, without some very distinguishable spiritual feelings within.—If we cannot be insensible to the benevolence of a friend in the common concerns of this life, but every expression of his kind regard for us, every token of his love, and care for our happiness, excites in us some pleasing idea of his character, some sentiment of gratitude and esteem;—surely we must feel infinitely more, from the unexampled benevolence of the greatest and best of friends; which he has displayed in such a variety of the most important instances, and particularly his “dying upon a cross,” that he might “redeem us to GOD by his blood.”—If we have any just idea of what it is to be sinners against the Most High,

and the tremendous consequences of falling into his hands as such, the very hope of deliverance in the way pointed out in the gospel through CHRIST, must awaken in us a variety of warm affections, particularly the most earnest desire and hope of the favour of GOD, and the most pleasing love of his infinite excellencies.

But, on the other hand, there may be sensations, which though, to a superficial observer, they may appear to bear some resemblance to the above, really arise from very different causes, and are of a very different nature and tendency ; sensations purely mechanical, or at best owing to superstitious credulity, and the force of a warm imagination led by false lights. And it is remarkable that the religious character formed upon these principles, is always crude, awkward, disgusting, and seldom of any long continuance, at least in the same form, unless
when

when supported by constitutional obstinacy.

We must, therefore, if we would be Christians indeed, learn to distinguish here, and see that our religious impressions are rational, *i. e.* such as are derived from the evidence of evangelical truth shining into the understanding; for no farther than we take our understandings with us, can our religious principles carry us with safety. It is true, in order to the forming of our minds to the love and practice of genuine Christianity, something infinitely superior to mere light and conviction, or the efforts of our own reason, is absolutely necessary; even a power derived from him, who is the fountain of all life, and eminently so of that of grace; “for
“in him it has pleased the Father
“that all fulness should dwell,” for the important purposes of our salvation; but even that power operates upon our

reason, and always in perfect consistency with it*. That is, the blessed God himself, in his dispensations of grace to man, considers and treats him as a rational Being, capable of moral government, and actually under it. Hence JESUS CHRIST is stiled, “ the LIGHT of
“ the world,” and is said, “ to open our
eyes,

* Since the preparing of these papers for the press, I have met with a passage in the pious Mr. HENRY's Letters, much to my purpose; which, as it may have weight with some of my readers, whose sentiments may lean too much to those I am opposing, I will here transcribe.

“ I declare, I look upon my religion to be reason in
“ its highest refinement. My reason says, *prove all*
“ *things*,—admit nothing without satisfactory proofs,
“ and when any thing is revealed by God, receive it
“ as an oracle.—I cannot but think likewise, that
“ every part of our religion (though absolutely undis-
“ coverable by reason) is, when discovered and under-
“ stood, perfectly rational, as it comports with the
“ attributes of the Godhead, suits the state of man, and
“ is admirably adapted to display the divine glory,
and

“ eyes, shine into our hearts, give us the
 “ light of the knowledge of God, and
 “ turn us from darkness to light,” and
 the like ; all which clearly implies, that
 our reason is particularly concerned in
 the affairs of religion.—However
 weak and impaired, it does not follow
 that it must not be used in humble de-
 pendence on the gracious assistance pro-
 mised us. A system of religion incon-
 sistent with reason, is not the system of
 the BIBLE, nor any way adapted to the
 human nature. The passions, indeed,

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must

“ and redress human misery. Whatever is formed
 “ with such a tendency, to this my reason readily sub-
 “ scribes, and pronounces worthy of all acceptance.”

HERVEY's Let. Vol. ii. Let. 120.

Dr. OWEN also has said as much in his Treatise of
 understanding the Word of God, page 10. Those
 who would prohibit us the use of reason in religion,
 would deal with us as the Philistines did with
 Sampson, first put out our eyes, and then make us
 grind at their mill. Whatever we know, we know it
 in, and by the use of our own reason.

must have their share here (for we are sentimental as well as rational Beings) but it is only in proportion to the hold that divine truth has of the understanding, and the subjection of the passions to that influence, that we can ever act regularly and consistently in religion; fix upon right objects of faith and worship; and bring forth the solid fruits of evangelical righteousness.—The most violent zeal for theological opinions, and the most rapturous fervours of devotion, without a rational conviction in the mind to support them, deserve not the name of religion; and are very far from that “reasonable service,” as the apostle styles it, which the blessed God requires of us.

It must be allowed, indeed, that the reasoning faculties of many of the common people, not only of the illiterate, but of those who have been driven through a course of education without a literary genius,

genius, are extremely low and limited; and that were it not for some religious oddity, as I may call it, or some party absurdity under a religious appearance, strongly impressed upon their imaginations (which, with them, is generally the ruling power) they would have no religion at all. Were you to laugh, or to reason them out of these conceits, unless, at the same time, you could reason them into some serious truths of equal influence and authority over them, you would deprive them of the chief support of their moral character and conduct; and expose them in a very dangerous degree to the attacks of the prophane and vicious. It is better for them, and for society, to let them alone in their mistakes, than attempt with such hazard to rectify them.

It is also possible, that even sacred truth itself, in some constitutions, may operate more sensibly upon the imagination,

nation, than the understanding, which will naturally give their religion an air and appearance of absurdity, to people of more rational discernment, even though it may be real and sincere in the main. They reason weakly, but they feel strongly; feel what leads them to the practice of a lower and less perfect kind of piety and virtue. And, therefore, though too much of their own weakness, and many mistakes and contradictions, mix with their religion, as they are right upon the whole, they justly claim our most tender allowances and charity. But even many of these also, we had better leave to themselves, and the good providence of God, than attempt to reason them out of their errors, and instruct them better; unless from some particular circumstances, we are pretty sure of success. It requires a great deal of prudence and address to deal with people under deep prejudices, and of a naturally enthusiastic

enthusiastic temperament, so as at once to preserve their zeal for religion, and cure them of their absurdities. One principal thing here, I think, is to endeavour to rectify their notions about the use and importance of reason in religion; and, if possible, convince them, that there is a real difference between reason as such, and the corruption of reason, and that they put the latter for the former. And yet if this is not done with caution, it is much but you draw upon yourself some reproachful epithet, and be esteemed no better than an heretic as the reward of your Christian compassion; and set them but the farther from the hope of recovery to juster sentiments.

There are, indeed, several texts of scripture, which people of this fanatical cast are very fond of quoting in support of their opinions and practices,—such as “ God has chosen the foolish things
“ of this world to confound the wise:—
“ By

“ By the foolishness of preaching saves
“ them that believe!—hides those things
“ from the wise and prudent, which he
“ reveals unto babes ;—if any would
“ be wise, let him become a fool, &c.”

—Which make nothing at all to their purpose, because they do not so much as suppose real folly to be preferable to real wisdom ; or that ignorance and weakness of mind, do, in themselves, really qualify a man for grace and salvation. What they teach us is,—that men, by their own reason, without a divine revelation and grace, cannot attain to the knowledge of the way of salvation, nor effectually apply its doctrines ;—That the great God bestows his grace without respect of persons, and their natural qualifications ; and adapts the dispensations of it to the light and feeling common to all men, and not to the opinions and prejudices of human philosophy, or the idolizers of weak and depraved reason :—

That

That the pride of false wisdom, and its vain conceits of self-sufficiency, set a man farther out of the way of evangelical and saving knowledge, than the plain common sense of the bulk of mankind:—That the more sensible we are of the real weakness of the most exalted and improved human reason, and the necessity of divine illumination, the more likely it is that we should become more truly wise. For God “resisteth the “proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”—That however absurd and foolish the method of saving mankind, by CHRIST crucified, might appear to minds intoxicated with pretended philosophy, it was evident from a due consideration of the scheme itself, as well as from its glorious effects, that it was indeed an appointment of infinite wisdom and goodness.

But though we ought to rejoice in the cross of CHRIST, as the life and soul of
all

all our religion and hope ; yet to bring into our notions and discourses about it, any enthusiastic absurdities and nonsensical conceits of our own weak heads, and presume to call them by the sacred names of the wisdom and power of God, is no better than blasphemy. But here I must pause.

And am, yours, &c.

LET.

L E T T E R X I I .

To the same. In Continuation.

REASON is the gift of God, and bestowed upon us for the most important purposes, amongst which religion surely may justly claim the first and chief place. To renounce reason here then, my dear sir, must be to oppose the primary intention of providence in bestowing it, and affront the divine goodness.—It is to quench the light of heaven, deface the natural image of God in us, lay ourselves open to the power of superstition, enthusiasm, and all sorts of diabolical delusions and impiety; and provoke our gracious Father to give us up to these most formidable evils, as a just judgment upon us. Even conscience itself, without this beam of celestial light to direct it, would be nothing more than a blind instinct, and
 prove

prove a very uncertain, and even dangerous guide in our inquiries about duty and happiness. Yea, the very word of God, which is given us as a "lamp to our feet," could not be of the least service to us, without the eye of reason to receive it. That word, indeed, is confessedly a supernatural revelation of divine truths of the highest importance and excellency; such as it was utterly impossible our reason should ever have discovered.—The grand and leading point in that revelation (viz.) "GOD in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself; or, CHRIST crucified as a propitiation for our sins, the power of GOD to salvation;" is not a suggestion of the human mind, or discovered by the force of it, but what springs intirely from the benevolence of the divine nature, or the infinitely gracious and incomprehensible LOVE OF GOD, and taught by him;—and yet not at all the less agreeable to reason
when

when discovered, and rightly understood, because it is the effect of the highest reason, even that of the DEITY; and therefore the proper object of a rational creature's regard, and indeed of no other's. It is by the help of this light that we discern the traces of supernatural truth, or divine revelation in any set of doctrines, or system of religion, proposed to us as such. That is, it is laid before us with the evidence of its divinity; reason considers this evidence, and, as it appears, judges and pronounces it divine. Thus the prophet ISAIAH*, when endeavouring to reclaim the people of Israel from idolatry, expostulates with them particularly on the folly and absurdity of their conduct, and calls upon them, to shew themselves men, *i. e.* as the context leads us to understand it, rational creatures, capable of discerning the traces of real wisdom

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* Isa. xlv. 8, Chap. xlv. 19.

and divinity in the religion he was pleading for, and of weakness and delusion in the other. But set aside the rational power, and there is nothing left to shew us the difference in such a case; nothing to tell us why we might not as well worship a stock or a stone, as the LIVING GOD.

Even the most miraculous attestations to any system of religion, can have no real force until we are assured they are miraculous, which is a point reason must determine; I say reason, for however graciously enlightened (as indeed it must be to receive divine truths savingly) it is reason still.—One considerable branch of evidence, in this case, is, the accomplishment of prophecy, but we seldom find the prophetic descriptions and the eventual facts so answer to each other, as to leave no room at all for the exercise of the mind, in order to perceive and point out the agreement.—Even the
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grand prophecies of all, viz. those relative to the Messiah, though they mark out his person, character, birth, life, sufferings, death, &c. with a sufficient clearness and precision; yet not so as to supersede the necessity of employing our reason, in order to perceive the conformity of the events to the predictions.

The DEITY, perhaps, if he pleased, might set before us every thing he requires us to believe, or receive for truth, in so strong and peculiar a light, as should leave no room, at least, no occasion, for the exertion of our rational faculties, by way of argumentative deduction, but compel our assent, as to self-evident propositions; yet, since it is certain he has not done so in fact, but the contrary, it is plain he expects us to make use of our reason* in our religious

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* Even they who affect to despise reason in the affairs of religion, pretend to give reasons why they do so,

disquisitions, as a medium of his own appointing ; though always remembering to look up to him, as the Father of all lights, for his gracious illumination, without which we shall know nothing to the purpose.

And as we receive true religion in the exercise of this power, by the same medium we ought to endeavour to propagate it ; that is, endeavour, in the first place, to convince reason of the truth, justness, and importance, of its doctrines and duties ; and then address ourselves to the affections, and engage them in its service. Thus we find the inspired apostle, “ reasoning out of the scriptures, “ and persuading men, to be reconciled “ to

so, that is to reason us out of our reason; the absurdity of which one would think must strike them even at first sight ; but indeed, they themselves generally allow of the use of it, where they are not too closely pinched with it, Acts xviii. 2. Chap. xviii, 27. Chap. xxiv. 25. 2 Cor. v. 11.

"to God." And thus our LORD himself appeals to the understandings and reason of his auditors for the validity of those scriptures he alledged, and the miracles he wrought in support of his pretensions to the character of the Messiah*.

I grant that this light, and indeed not less that of the gospel, may be abused through the weakness and corruption of our natures, and therefore may impose upon, and mislead the judgment and affections, and this even in the great affairs of religion. Which shews the necessity of a divine revelation and grace ; and that great care and diligence should be used in the exercise of our rational powers with all the assistances providence affords ; but not that we should lay them intirely aside.—Though under pretence of reason, some may, and do reject the

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* John v. 39—46, &c.

most vital and interesting truths of Christianity in principle and practice, yet this will not justify our giving up the use of it, as inconsistent with a due regard to those truths! for at this rate we may give up our BIBLE too, since that has been abused in as flagrant a manner. I say, therefore, we ought to make use of our own understanding, though in an humble dependence on the divine assistance. And if we do so, and can be content to learn of GOD, what he alone can teach us; are willing to wait with patience the removal of difficulties; and do not make too much haste to our conclusions;—if we keep always in view the first principles, the plain indubitable truths of religion, and do not confound our minds by involving them in inquiries too deep for their present strength and capacity;—if we take this method, and accompany it with constant prayer to the great fountain of all reason, we
may

may depend upon it, we shall not be left to fall into any material or ruinous mistakes.—The wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, will be our security against so dreadful a calamity.

But still, perhaps, you will ask, “ are there not some, who affect to distinguish themselves, as the greatest champions for the purity of religion, who are continually exclaiming with the utmost violence against reason, as naturally destructive of its vital power and genuine orthodoxy ; with whom reason is but another name for heresy ; and who are sure to anathemize, with peculiar bitterness, all that dare to assert its authority ? ”

I confess this is the case too much, and that there is such a thing as a “ zeal for God, not according to knowledge.” But the thing is, they do not distinguish between reason itself, as such, and reason corrupted by sin. The sincere and

honest amongst them (one would charitably hope) really mean the latter ONLY, though, for want of better attention or judgment, they seem to include the former. They forget, that were not man a rational Being, he could not possibly be the subject of religion and moral government at all ; could have no idea of DEITY, or of any obedience due to him ; nor have any feeling of the sanctions and motives that enforce it.—Take away reason, and you sink man into something less than brute, and religion into mere folly and superstition.

The brutes discover some lower degrees of reason ; they have imagination, memory, invention, consciousness ; and, in some instances, appear capable of deducing consequences from given premises.—What distinguishes Man from them is, the vast extent and superiority of his reasoning powers, and particularly his capacity of discerning the DEITY and
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his perfections, moral truth, and obligation; and enjoying the divine felicity thence resulting; of all which the brutes appear utterly incapable.

It is true, there are "heights and depths in the love of CHRIST," and many other particulars in our BIBLES, (and so there are in nature that infinitely surpass the power of our reason fully to comprehend, yet all so perfectly agreeable to it, that the more we are enlightened into them, the more we approve them. It is to the corruption and depravity of the rational power, not to the thing itself, that any of the truths of divine revelation are opposed; for, not to destroy the reason of man, or set it aside as intirely useless in religion, but to restore it to its proper use and dignity, is the design of all the divine dispensations in our favour.

By addressing the passions only, we may alarm mankind, and work upon
their

their corrupt prejudices and superstition ; awaken false fears, excite false hopes, and lead them into a kind of enthusiastic counterfeit piety. And there now is, and always hath been, a set of men in the world, who, by this means have done surprising things ; made the deepest impressions on the minds of the weak and credulous, and led them into the belief of the most monstrous and even blasphemous opinions, and to the practice of all sorts of iniquity.—All the idolatry of the Heathen world, and worse idolatry of the Christian, has been introduced and supported under the sacred name of religion ; but not by just reasonings, but artful addresses to the corrupt passions and prejudices of mankind, and working upon their superstitious fears.

There is a conscience in all men, and some sense of guilt and dread of the displeasure of the invisible power ; and wicked and crafty men, know how to take advantage

advantage of this principle and disposition to carry on their selfish designs ; and under the pretence of better light and purer truth, have introduced into the church, and the world, the most damnable heresies and moral impurities. Witness SIMON MAGUS, and his followers, in the earliest days of Christianity, and innumerable others in every age.

I do not write these things, my friend, because I am under any apprehensions of your really leaning to the side of absurdity and delusion in religion ; but to confirm and strengthen your mind, in its just attachment to rational piety, and encourage your modest endeavours to establish your wavering, or reclaim your misled acquaintance. I would not, for the world, be the means of leading you into a vain conceit of the sufficiency of human reason, without revelation and the grace of God, " to find the way of life ;" or of lessening your sense of the infinite obligations

obligations you are under to the blessed Redeemer, the light and life of an otherwise dark and perishing world.—And, therefore, while we plead for the use of reason in religion, let us guard against abusing it, by a presumptuous confidence in its power, in contempt of the divine goodness. There is nothing more common than to run out of one extreme into another;—one trampling reason into the dirt, another exalting it to a DEITY. And it is too often observable, that when a man once comes to lay aside all serious regard to divine revelation and grace, and resolves to depend intirely upon his reason in his religious disquisitions, he is very soon lost, and justly left to wander about in the dreary regions of universal scepticism*, where the mind wearied out with inquiries,

* This is generally the case with the violent opposers of divine revelation since the brighter discoveries of the gospel. Under the former dispensations, the enemies

inquiries, can find no single principle to rest upon a moment; but is hurried from one uncertainty to another, until at last it plunges into the bottomless gulph of downright Atheism, where reason, conscience, and every thing that can distinguish

guises of revelation generally fell into the monstrous absurdities of downright idolatry, and worshipped, as their God, the works of their own hands. An absurdity so monstrous, that one would think no rational Being could possibly be guilty of it, were not the fact undeniable; especially if we consider it was the case not only of the low, illiterate, unthinking mob, but even of the greatest men, princes, and philosophers. For which I cannot think any better reason can be assigned, than that it was the just judgment of God upon them*, for the guilt of, wilfully, or wantonly, rejecting the gracious and necessary light of divine revelation, which he had given them, and setting up their own depraved reason as an all-sufficient guide in the concerns of religion. And what terminated in idolatry then, terminates in Atheism now; which takes away even the very means of recovery.

* See Isaiah xliv. 12—19.

guish man from brute, is irrecoverably lost; where "confusion lies confounded, "hope never comes," but the most dismal impenetrable darkness, horror, and despair reign uncontrouled. As, therefore, we would escape such deep perdition, let us think humbly of our reason, use it with a becoming caution, thankfully embrace the light of the divine word, and form our religious sentiments and character upon the plan there laid down; our piety, then, will be manly and rational; yet lively, fervent, chearful; ornamental to ourselves, and beneficial to society.

I am, &c.

L E T.

LETTER XIII.

To ****.

Anecdotes of HONORIUS, his Conversion, and Address to his Companions.

Parcus deorum cultor & infrequens,
Infanientis dum sapientiæ

Consultus erro: Nunc retrorsum

Vela dare, atque iterare cursus
Cogor relictos. ———

HOR. Carm. Lib. i. Od. 34.

IT is your happiness, my dear young friend, that you have retreated so early from the "paths of the destroyer," and felt the force of evangelical truth upon your heart, leading you into those of eternal life and salvation. Several of your former companions, some of whom you are still obliged occasionally to associate with, are yet wretched slaves to their vices. I know you sincerely pity them;
and

and ardently wish they were sharers with you in the grace of God, and the truly divine pleasures you by that means enjoy. Perhaps the address of HONORIUS, herewith enclosed, if put into some of their hands, at a proper season, might have a good influence upon their minds. However, your partiality for the writer, will I dare say, render it an agreeable entertainment to you; and as it may serve to confirm you in your right sentiments and practice, I send it without any farther apology; only as a proper introduction, it will be necessary to observe, that HONORIUS was the only son of a gentleman of considerable fortune in——— His father and mother were both of them persons of real worth, and possessed that spirit of fervent and rational piety, that is too seldom to be found, even amongst the truly good. They took a great deal of pains to instil into the mind of their son, the principles of pure and genuine religion

religion, and to impress his conscience with a sense of their importance even from the earliest dawn of intellect.

HONORIUS had naturally a good understanding, and an ingenuous openness of heart, so that he very readily received these parental instructions, though, as his spirits were very lively and volatile, he was always in danger of forgetting them, and too much disposed to embrace every temptation that flattered him with the prospect of gratifying the lower affections of his nature. However, he discovered no remarkably vicious inclination, while under the immediate care of his parents, or at the grammar-school; where he had the happiness of a master, who attended to the religion and morals, as well as classical accomplishments of the youth under his care, in a degree beyond what is too generally practised.

At about seventeen, HONORIUS was sent to the university. But there, not-

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withstanding the good discipline of the college he was placed in, and the attention of his worthy tutor and other friends, he fell into bad company, soon imbibed their libertine notions of life, and followed their example, seemingly, with as much spirit, and insensibility to the reproaches of conscience, as any of them. His father could but hear of too many instances of his profligacy, though not of all; and this, not without great sorrow of heart, and the most earnest endeavours to reclaim him, but to no purpose.

He stayed the usual time at the university; and from thence went and lived upon an estate left him by an uncle, which though not large, was sufficient to support him in too great a degree of libertine gentility.

The divine goodness, however, did not forsake him; for, by means with which his address will particularly acquaint
you

you, and which, therefore, I shall not here anticipate, he was so impressed with the impropriety and wickedness of his past life, and with the reasonableness and excellency of religion, that from that time he became a new man, and is now a shining ornament to the Christian name.

After some time, as his mind became pretty well settled in this happy course of life, reflecting upon the truly miserable condition of his former companions in wickedness, he resolved to make, at least, one attempt to reclaim them. He knew several of them were men of sense, and had enjoyed a religious education in their early youth. He considered, they were reasonable and immortal Beings, and, as such, capable of the knowledge and enjoyment of the supreme good, the friendship of the great and Blessed God; and yet actually prostituting their powers of body and mind to the most inglorious

and pernicious purposes; rendering themselves the disgrace of the human nature in this world; and drawing down upon their guilty heads, the displeasure of the Almighty in the next.—These considerations awakened in his breast all the peculiar tenderness of a truly Christian friendship, for such, indeed, his former regard for them was now become. He determined therefore to attend one of their weekly nocturnal assemblies; and there, before their passions were inflamed by their usual discourse and drinking, to address them with a plain serious account of himself, and the reasons of his withdrawing from them, together with some suitable remonstrances naturally arising from the subject. And he fell into this measure the more readily, as he presumed his former interest in their esteem, which was not small, would be one considerable means of inducing them to hear him patiently; and the goodness of his design,

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design, and the natural unaffected plainness and seriousness with which he thought he could speak, would, as he hoped, prevent their ridicule; if not, he was prepared to bear it.

I am, &c.

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THE
ADDRESS OF HONORIUS,

*To a Society of Libertines, to which he himself
once belonged.*

YOU have often heard me with pleasure, my friends, when I used to harangue you upon the subject of our wild exploits, and have too often felt the force of what I said,—have been roused from your occasional indolence, and animated to midnight debaucheries and riots by only a dozen or two of sentences, uttered with the genuine spirit, and in the laconic stile of the fraternity.

I am now going to address you in another manner, and upon a subject as opposite to those I once entertained you with, as light to darkness.—You think me serious,—I am really so;—but do not imagine I am turned fanatic, and going

to insult your understandings, or provoke your spleen, with the rant of enthusiasm. I profess myself a SINCERE CHRISTIAN, —and conscious of the dignity of that character, shall endeavour to “speak the words of soberness and truth.”

You may, perhaps, of late have entertained some unfavourable sentiments of me, and think me over-run with absurdity and melancholy. But I assure you, I have not lost one grain of my spirit and cheerfulness; am no slave to superstition, no bigot to theological opinions, but in every thing just the same man I was; except, that now my appetites and passions are brought into a due subordination to my superior faculties, and all to the authority of the greatest and best of Beings.—My desires are now directed to more worthy objects; my employments are more rational; and my pleasures more solid and refined. And, I presume, gentlemen, upon my former

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interest in your esteem, the benevolence of my design in this address, and your known candour and good nature, to hope you will indulge me the liberty I am taking, and hear me patiently, and without interruption, till I have done.

RELIGION is my subject. I shall not, however, trouble you with a detail of the evidences of the divine original of Christianity. I know you are not so lost to common sense, and the moral feelings natural to the human heart, or so intoxicated with the conceits of false philosophy, as to deny the real divinity of a system of religion that so fully approves itself to every man's sober conscience. Your sin is not infidelity,—you scorn so poor and cowardly a subterfuge in favour of your vices, so common amongst many of our half-witted workers of iniquity. Nor is wickedness itself, as such, your object; but the spirit and heroism, as you affect to call it, with which
you

you commit it, and the gratification of your sensual and licentious appetites.—These are your enjoyments, and the motives to most of your mad adventures. Mischievous effects will sometimes follow, but they are not your ruling design.—Spirits like yours are seldom actuated by pure malevolence, and therefore you are generally very ready to make satisfaction for your trespasses. The only irreparable injuries of consequence you are guilty of towards others, are done to those unhappy women whose innocence you too often sacrifice to your wantonness and love of intrigue; and whom you expose to habitual vice, disease, and infamy in this world, and to everlasting perdition in the next.—These are injuries indeed of the deepest die, and every way out of your power to repair.—Here you sink even below yourselves; and act a part every way unworthy even the name of gentlemen. But otherwise, I confess
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with pleasure, you have always discovered amidst your most vicious indulgences, a great deal of that generosity and goodness of heart, that does honour to the human nature ; and, I know very well, often feel within yourselves a real veneration for virtue, though you so frequently violate her sacred laws.—We often used indeed, to attack the clergy of all denominations, and draw from their characters a world of (what I now call wicked) entertainment : but we generally singled out such as really deserved our satire.—The malicious bigot,—the sly canting hypocrite,—the drunkard,—the impure,—the niggardly oppressor,—wretches that wear the dress, and eat the bread of the church, while they are undermining the very foundations of her interest and honour ;—whose solemn pretences, are a mere burlesque upon religion and virtue ; and who, by the virulent and contagious poison of their example, do infinitely more

more mischief to society than an equal number of the vilest libertines amongst the laity. Though when we seriously consider this, and to what peculiarly deep and dreadful perdition, their so enormous guilt must expose them, we must acknowledge their characters afford us matter of the most serious grief and indignation, rather than ridicule.

You will plead, perhaps, in favour of your vices, "that they are not so great
 "in reality as in appearance.—That
 "much may be laid to the charge of the
 "vigour and gaiety of your animal spirits,
 "which in spite of the urgent admonitions,
 "of better reason and conscience,
 "do in a manner irresistibly impel you to
 "offend."—But, my friends, after all the
 excuses that can be made, your own hearts
 will tell you, that you are utterly inexcusable,
 and that there is a REALITY in your crimes,
 shocking, not only to the more serious and
 virtuous part of mankind, but
 even

even to yourselves, very often, in the hour of cool reflection. It must be allowed, indeed, that the cold pleas of reason, and even the warmer remonstrances of conscience, too often prove ineffectual against the violence of depraved appetite, enflamed by the prospects of immediate gratification.—But why is it so? Has not infinite goodness put into your hands the proper means of enforcing those pleas and remonstrances, and of restraining the violence of corrupted nature, and promised his assistance and blessing in the diligent use of them?—You must acknowledge he has; but at the same time acknowledge also, that instead of thus using those means, you have wilfully neglected and abused them, and have often made a serious regard to them the subject of your jest and ridicule. A circumstance that must dreadfully aggravate your guilt. For, what is this, but to trifle with the eternal God,
and

and wantonly repulse the hand of his paternal grace, stretched out to save you from the most horrid perdition! Nor will the gaiety and vigour of those animal spirits that now give you so much pleasure at the expence of your virtue, last for ever. Sickness may soon impair them, or the cold hand of death still sooner utterly extinguish them, and put an everlasting end to all the hope of happiness from them; but reason and conscience are immortal principles, and therefore, though ever so strongly resisted and borne down by the culpable violence of sensual appetite, or amused by the busy scenes of false pleasure now, they will certainly return upon you, in another world at least, and that with irresistible and most tormenting power.—Death is the life of conscience; and then, stripped of the body and all its sensations, you will be all conscience, and conscience

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science itself all light, all feeling, all horror !

Be intreated then, my friends, to think seriously of these things, before it be too late. Think of that “temperance and “righteousness” you have departed from, and of that tremendous judgment which will so SURELY come. And if you feel your hearts struck with the reflection, O do not, with the Roman libertine in the like case, put off your repentance to a more convenient season, in future, though but to-morrow ; but hear now the voice of GOD, and live. The morrow may never come to you, or if it does, will find you the more hardened in sin, and farther from repentance, by such presumptuous delay.

You seem surprized, gentlemen, as if at a loss to account for the strange language and sentiments with which I am addressing you. I will tell you sincerely all that is material in my case.—Hear me
with

with attention and candour, and when I have done, if you see any just cause to censure me, you have my full leave to do it in your own way.

I was obliged, some time ago, to spend a few weeks at Lord L——'s, a gentleman, you will all acknowledge, of great sense and spirit; no dupe to credulity or superstition; rationally, not fanatically good.—And no wonder; for he reads, understands, and lives by the BIBLE. His reason is illuminated by the divine light that shines there; his heart feels the power of the sacred and interesting truths there recorded; and he acts habitually under their influence. He has such notions of the Supreme Being; of his greatness and majesty, as produce in his conscience a settled awe and reverence of his invisible presence.—Such ideas of his goodness, as warm his affections with the most lively gratitude, and inspire him with the most delightful and animating hopes

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hopes of his eternal friendship. Hence a chearful, manly, unaffected piety, benevolence, and every Christian virtue, appear in his whole conduct, and throw a kind of venerable and pleasing glory around him; such as attracts universal esteem, and renders him at once an ornament and blessing to society. I ever, even in my mad days, as I may justly call them, loved that man, and felt his character inspire me with a reverence that gave me pleasure; though otherwise I paid little regard to it, and never thought of setting it up for my example; as nothing could well be farther from the taste and principles that then governed me.

I had not been here more than three days, before I found the sober pleasures I pursued with his lordship, which his liveliness rendered peculiarly agreeable, strongly dispose me to reflection. Reason and conscience, which an incessant attention to my wild delights would ne-

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ver suffer me to hear, seemed now under the influence of some superior power; and in a manner compelled me to consider and look back upon myself. My first reflections, indeed were not a little distressing, as they were pretty much exercised upon my many violations of the divine laws. I could approve neither my conduct nor my motives; I could not even excuse them; but was obliged to pass sentence upon myself, as a notorious offender against the authority of reason, of conscience, and of GOD. The character of this truly great man was continually before me, and made me see my own, in a light, which however disagreeable, reason compelled me to allow was just.

These uneasinesses, you may be sure I endeavoured to get rid of; and, I fear, should have done it the shortest way, (viz.) by plunging at once into my former follies and vices; but I had here

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no opportunity. I had, indeed, a variety of amusements, but they were such as did not lead me out of myself, dissipate thought, and drown reflection, intirely. I was disposed therefore still to consider; and this disposition was greatly promoted, by our constant attendance on the public worship of God every Sunday. The minister of the parish, was a serious, sensible, good man; no enthusiast; yet he appeared to have felt the power of divine truth, and therefore spoke as one earnestly concerned to have his hearers feel it also. His manner was natural and unaffected; his reasoning just and strong; and the whole of his preaching extremely well adapted to promote the interest of religion and virtue; and his conversation such as became the dignity of his profession as a minister of God.

He, one day in particular, insisted on that clause in the apostle's sermon to the Athenians—"but now he commandeth

"all

“ all men every where to repent.” He, explained the nature of repentance, and demonstrated the necessity of it, from the genius of the Christian dispensation, as opening to our view, the most astonishing goodness and mercy of GOD on the one hand, and his most awful purity and justice on the other ; as they appear in the humiliation, sufferings, and death of his Son for our sins, and the appointment of all mankind to a state of inconceivable happiness or misery in another world. These interesting points, on which the apostle’s argument turns, he set in so strong and clear a light, and pressed with such earnestness and vigour upon the conscience, that I felt the conviction at my very heart; and could not but acknowledge a power more than that of man accompanied what I heard. My sins were set in order before my eyes; and with the most serious remorse and overwhelming shame, I silently acknowledged, to my

offended God, my aggravated guilt, and the righteousness of that indignation at which my soul trembled. And yet from the glorious views the discourse led me into of the greatness of the divine mercy, and the infinite fulness of that atonement for sin, which the Redeemer has made by the sacrifice of himself, I could not but entertain some very sensible and encouraging hopes ; and particularly from the observations the preacher made upon the apostle's representation of the divine condescension in his epistle to the Corinthians, where he says,—“ That God is “ in CHRIST, reconciling the world to “ himself, and now even beseeches his “ guilty creatures to be reconciled to “ him.”—To think of such a Being so offended BESEECHING his guilty creatures to be reconciled, and, to enforce his plea, pointing to his dearly beloved Son, suffering and dying upon a cross for them—how amazing, awful, encouraging is this ! What reason to fear such a God ! What reason to hope in such mercy !

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My mind thus filled with a thousand thoughts of myself, of God, of another world, quite new to me, I went home with his lordship, remarking upon what we had heard ; for indeed it was almost impossible to do otherwise ; and took the first opportunity of retiring to my apartment, in order to consider these things more particularly. I did consider, and finding a BIBLE in the closet adjoining, I looked attentively over the several passages I could recollect from the discourse, and some others of the same tendency ; all which served to deepen my sense of the excellency and importance of the truths I had received ; and, though I had been long a sad stranger to prayer, could not help putting up some earnest petitions to the universal parent, to direct my inquiries, strengthen my resolutions, and dispose my mind to embrace and obey all his will. I again returned to my reflections with renewed concern,

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and was even astonished to think, that I could call myself a rational and immortal Being ; a-kin to the most high and glorious fountain of all existence ; and yet live continually in the grossest inattention to my own dignity, and act a part, in many instances, worse than brutish ; that I could even believe a future state of retribution, know myself a guilty creature, and yet be so stupid, as to spend whole years of an uncertain life, the only space given me for repentance and salvation, not merely in amusements and follies infinitely below my nature, but what is still worse, in offending, by flagrant vices, the greatest and best of Beings ; and thereby exposing myself to the tremendous effects of his just displeasure.—The consciousness of such notorious abuse of my intellectual powers, and the infinite goodness of God, manifested in such a way as that described in the BIBLE, filled my mind with distressing shame, remorse and fear ;

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under the pressure of which I could find no effectual relief or consolation, but in the very mercy I had so repeatedly and basely forfeited ; and this only as it appeared through that divinely appointed medium, the sacrifice and intercession of the blessed Redeemer.—HERE I could perceive a just and rational foundation for comfort, and ONLY here ; because here ONLY I could see the awful majesty of the divine government maintained in its full glory, while the guilty penitent was forgiven, and admitted to the possession of eternal life. Here therefore I was resolved to fix the anchor of my immortal hope ; and HERE I first tasted the divine blessing of peace with God.

Nor was any part of this, I assure you, the effect of spleen or vapours, or melancholic fancy ; for I never enjoyed better health, or the freer exercise of my natural spirits, than at this time. But I found, that the truths which now took

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possession of my mind, exactly answered to its moral feelings ; and that they were supported by the highest and most indisputable authorities in the world, even the plain declarations of the BIBLE, and my own conscience. Hence I was, indeed, greatly affected, but it was no more than what naturally arose from the occasion. I felt no unaccountably violent agitations or disturbances of my passions, though all surprisingly awakened into a kind of new life.—All was regular, serenely awful, and serious ; such as became the dignity and importance of the affair ; the turning of a sinful creature to his GOD ; the exertion of the divine power in the salvation of an immortal. My grief and fear, on the account of my aggravated guilt, was very great ; yet such as my enlightened and coolest reason approved and pronounced just. I had encouraging hopes, in the views of the divine mercy ; but they were such as
my

my judgment, as well as my affections, could rejoice in. My knowledge was now greatly enlarged, and what I knew, made far deeper impressions upon my heart ; though, as to the main principles of it, much the same as what I, and indeed you, my friends, have many a time confessed,—viz.—“ That there is a God
“ the moral governor of the world,—that
“ we are guilty creatures, and as such
“ exposed to his displeasure,—that there
“ is a future state of retribution,—that
“ we must repent in order to be happy.”
“ —These are laws, of religion and
“ virtue, that he has written in our hearts, and to these I may add many others, which we find written in our BIBLES, equally clear and rational, and of the highest importance to our happiness ; the sacred authority of which we cannot but believe, and sometimes even feel too, in spite of all our gaiety and inattention. The difference is, I see these things now, particularly

particularly my guilt and pollution, and the divine justice and mercy, in an almost infinitely stronger, and more affecting light ; I believe them, because they have got hold of my conscience as well as my reason, and live there, I trust, in their governing power and influence.—And there may they ever live !

These sentiments naturally led me into a manner of behaviour, correspondent to them.—I was chearful,—I had reason to be so ; and indeed infinitely more reason now than ever.—For, though I could not but reflect upon my past life with painful concern, and felt many an alarming apprehension about my condition, at times ; yet the assured belief I had of the goodness of that Being I had offended, and the ample provision made for the salvation of sinful creatures in the gospel, diffused such pleasing hope and consolation through my heart continually, as I had never known before. And
the

the more I read, and considered the BIBLE account of the great Redeemer, and the glorious assurances he has given us of the divine mercy, the more that hope and consolation abounded. I could now enter into the spirit of many of those passages in the sacred books relative to his person and character, with which I was intirely unacquainted before, and saw innumerable entertaining beauties in them. —The name of JESUS, lightly as I once thought of it, was now celestial music to my ear, and joy unspeakable to my heart! I could feel those strong lines of Dr. YOUNG addressed to him.*

“Thou, my all!
 “My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!
 “My soul’s ambition! pleasure, wealth! my world!
 “My light in darkness! and my life in death!
 “My boast thro’ time! bliss thro’ eternity!
 “Eternity too short to speak thy praise!
 “Or fathom thy profound of love to man!”

Excuse

* Night Thoughts, No. 4.

Excuse my warmth, gentlemen ; it is impossible to see things in the light I now do—to see the Son of GOD even dying, in peculiar misery upon a cross, to save me from the awful consequences of my sins, and open the way of eternal life to my otherwise perishing soul, without such sensations of esteem and gratitude, and such endeavours to express them, as must appear somewhat extraordinary to those who have not the same apprehensions.

In these happy circumstances, however, I could not but appear more serious and thoughtful than usual, to the very great and agreeable surprise of my truly honourable friend. For, though he expected from my liberal education and pretensions to the character of a gentleman, that I should behave with some decorum in his house ; yet he did not expect to find that decorum carried so far, and sit so easy and natural upon
me ;

me ; much less that I should, as I often did, enter into his sentiments and manner of life, with a warmth of heart that shewed it was not the effect of mere complaisance, but of some better principle.

And now, my dear friends, I appeal to your own hearts, whether there is any thing in all this, that can justly expose me to your serious censure, or your ridicule ? Whether the sentiments I have adopted, and the way of life I am in, and resolve (by the divine assistance) to continue in to the end be not much more becoming the rank we hold in the system of existence ; our near relation to the DEITY, and our interest in another world ; than the sentiments and conduct I before embraced and followed with you ?—If any one of you will attempt to demonstrate to me, that I am wrong ; or under any fanatical, pitiable, ridiculous influence ; I promise you I will hear him

him with candour, coolly consider what he says, and follow conviction ;—or if you can shew me, that my former life of excess and riot, and sensual indulgence is more becoming my rational nature, more consistent with the hope of an happy immortality, or more conducive to my real felicity upon the whole, as a rational and immortal Being ; I will this moment return to it, and beg the favour of a re-admission into your fraternity.

You are all silent—Yes, your own hearts tell you I am right, and that I am restored to my reason, to myself, to my true interest and happiness. No longer a miserable slave to foolish impetuous vicious passions, but in possession of my nobler powers, animated with the solid and most delightful hope of eternal life and glory, in the presence and friendship of the greatest and best of Beings. I am now, I trust, a Christian indeed, and rejoice in that character as my highest honour

nour ; my constant wish and care is to act worthy of it ; and though still exposed to many temptations and dangers, my dependence for victory over them all is in HIS power and mercy, who glories in being the SAVIOUR of men. In a word, I consider myself now as “ redeemed unto GOD by the blood of his Son,” and therefore under every obligation of gratitude and interest to devote myself to his will, and govern myself by the rules and directions he has given me ; imitating his moral perfections, doing justice, loving mercy, diffusing happiness every where, within my little sphere of influence.

And here, my friends, suffer me to expostulate with you a few minutes, now while your passions are cool, and reason and conscience have room to exert their power and authority.—Remember you are MEN, not brutes, nor devils ; not utterly incapable of the knowledge of your Maker, or the enjoyment of his friendship

ship as *those*; nor shut up in everlasting despair as *these*. This is at once, your glory, and your mercy;—think then as men; act as such, *i. e.* act up to the dignity of your rational and immortal nature and hopes.—The pleasures you find, or rather think you find, in the wicked gratification of your headstrong passions, what are they? Mean, groveling, pernicious;—at best but mere shadows; imaginary, momentary uncertainties, that can only amuse for the present, but not bear the least sober reflection without pain; and must soon leave you, with a weight of misery upon your hearts beyond the power of mortal language to describe;—leave you in full possession of your vicious appetites, without any thing to gratify them; in possession of your reason and conscience, without any thing to comfort them; or abate the anguish of reflections every moment arising in them.

You

ADDRESS OF HONORIUS. 193

You profess to believe the truth of the evangelical history ; but can you believe that the Son of GOD, the LORD of glory, made his appearance in our world, taught such divine doctrines, set such an illustrious example of piety and virtue, and at last died in circumstances so peculiarly painful, to excuse you in sin, and leave you at liberty to spend all the time of a short forfeited, uncertain life, in an incessant pursuit of vice and wickedness, or even in perpetual amusement and dissipation? Surely you cannot! What then must you think of a practice so inconsistent with your belief, as yours at present avowedly is? The “ devils believe “ and tremble;” you believe and tremble not, though, while in your sins, you are under the same dreadful condemnation with them.

I know indeed, by myself, how averse you are to thoughts and reasonings of this nature, and how light you will probably
O make

make of them; but let me again appeal to your own hearts, are not these things so? Is there not a just God who will punish the impenitent violators of his laws, and abusers of his long-suffering mercy? And is it not utterly impossible to fall into his hands as such, without being miserable, past utterance, past conception? Is not the happiness which he has connected with virtue, the most perfect, abundant, durable?—Can there be any doubt of his forgiving the penitent believers in his word, though guilty as the worst of you are, since he has given his Son to be a propitiation for their sins? There can be none—Life and death eternal, therefore, you see are in fact set before you by the great author of your Being; he invites you to the one, and warns you of the other, by a thousand most affecting motives pressed upon your attention, with all the authority and tenderness

ADDRESS OF HONORIUS. 195

derness of a FATHER.—This you know
 is a just representation of things.—Can
 you then hesitate one moment what you
 shall do?—Is there any room for a com-
 petition between the demands and
 entreaties of the ETERNAL GOD, and
 the idle solicitations of a vicious na-
 ture? Are the false pleasures arising
 from an intemperate indulgence of mere
 animal appetite, or the wanton intrigues
 or profane sallies of depraved wit,
 to be named with the real joys of pure
 religion and virtue, the friendship of
 CHRIST, and the consciousness of the
 divine approbation through him? You
 cannot seriously pretend to answer in
 the affirmative. What madness then
 to act as if you could!—Look upon
 the Son of God, becoming the Son
 of man in our world: consider his
 character as it is drawn by the sacred
 historians; how great, worthy, amia-
 ble! How pleasing to his heavenly
 O 2 Father!

Father ! How glorious to our nature !
 —And consider your own, how every
 way the reverse !—He is now, as the
 reward of his piety and obedience, and
 love to us, exalted to the possession of
 the highest honours and delights ; and
 compassionately entreats you, even you,
 by all the unparalleled sorrows, and bene-
 volent designs of his death, to tread
 in the same paths of righteousness,
 and share with him in the same kind of
 felicity and glory ! And can you resist
 such astonishing, condescending, good-
 ness as this ! I would fain hope you
 cannot ;—and yet I fear, for you seem
 even now as if you would object and
 say,—“ All this may be very true and
 “ just ; but much too refined and ab-
 “ stracted to engage our attention.
 “ We are for present enjoyments, and
 “ such as we can see, feel, and under-
 “ stand, almost without the trouble of
 “ thinking,”—But, my dear friends, is
 this

ADDRESS OF HONORIUS. 197

this the voice of even your reason ? —Have you no other feelings but these superficial ones ?—Can you always shut out reflection, and avoid the force of serious truth ?—Do not you find something in you, that lies deeper than your bodily senses, or those of mere imagination ? Something that perceives with peculiar apprehension and sensibility, the difference between virtue and vice, religion and impiety, and the respective happiness and misery connected with them ; and that frequently leads you, even in spite of yourselves, into the more abstracted nature of things, your relation to the great God and the eternal world ; and assures you of their reality ? And do not these sensations really coincide with the evident constitution and order of nature ? Do they not tend to make you wise, and good, and happy, your own reason being judge ? Or, do you

renounce all pretensions to rationality and moral feeling, and rank yourselves with the beasts of the field? If you did, what would it avail you, unless by that means, you could indeed alter the nature of things, and could even die as well as live like them?—But I am sure, whatever contrary appearances your practice may have, your sentiments are not thus low and groveling. You acknowledge yourselves rational and immortal, and that you are now living for another world of unutterable happiness or misery; only act up to these acknowledgements, my friends; hear with reverence the pleadings of conscience, they are no less than the voice of GOD, within you; hear his holy word, which speaks the same language, though far more explicitly and forceably.—No longer amuse and deceive yourselves with the glare of false happiness and glory, by obey-
ing

ing the dictates of corrupted nature ; but follow the light of sacred truth, shining upon your understandings, and in that rational way seek for that happiness and glory, prepared by infinite wisdom and goodness, and assuredly promised to all who sincerely seek it.—Retire, I entreat you, a few moments into yourselves, consider what you now really are, and what e'er long, you must really be.—Though sinners against God ; think what powers and assistances he has graciously given you towards your recovery ;—how seriously awful that JUSTICE, which you so greatly provoke by your libertine course of life ; how adorable that MERCY that persuades you to repent and be reconciled to the Father of your spirits ! And believe me, there is no medium here ; but you “ MUST either obey the “ voice of his mercy, or perish ;” Not lose your existence, but, what is

O 4

infinitely

infinitely worse, all the comforts of it in the unfathomable depths of misery.

I see, gentlemen, you are surprized at my discourse; I am so at your patience and attention in hearing me—I will urge you no longer; you may, perhaps, seriously reflect upon what I have said. I most fervently wish you may;—but if otherwise, and you are determined to raise the laugh upon me, do so, I am prepared to bear it; however, let me beseech you to remember, that CONSCIENCE, not RIDICULE, is the proper test of truth in cases of this important nature; to your consciences therefore I appeal, and there leave my appeal, until we appear, as we certainly must, before his tribunal, who shall judge the quick and the dead; where the just sentence of conscience will be confirmed with the most sacred solemnity; and all the most confident and daring ridicule be struck dumb with everlasting confusion

ADDRESS OF HONORIUS. 201

confusion and despair. O hear then
now the voice of conscience!—Hear
that of CHRIST!—That you may in-
deed find mercy in that GREAT DECIS-
SIVE DAY.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

To Mr. * * * * *. With a Consolatory Letter to SOPHRON and SOPHRONISSA, on the Death of their only Child.

THE late case of two worthy friends, for whom I have a particular esteem, is so very much like that of your good brother and sister, my dear sir, that I cannot help sending you a short account of it, with what I wrote to those friends upon the melancholy occasion ; which, if you think it proper, and likely to answer any valuable end, you may transmit to your mourning relations. They are yet but young in the school of affliction ; I should rejoice to be any way assistant to their improvement and comfort, but have not intimacy enough to justify the freedom of writing directly to them.

SOPHRON

L E T T E R X. 203

SOPHRON and SOPHRONISSA, (for so I shall call the worthy friends above mentioned,) were both of them of some considerable family and fortune; but, what is infinitely more to their honour, they were pious, just, benevolent; and, in consequence, enjoyed the peculiar affections of the good, the esteem of their numerous acquaintance, and the daily prayers and blessings of the poor, whose miseries they not only very sensibly felt, but as readily endeavoured to remove.

Their conjugal union, was founded in a warm, yet rational, affection to each other, and that divine love which is peculiar to sincere Christians. Their domestic happiness, therefore, was as complete as the present state of human nature could well admit; and this, after some years, crowned with the birth of a son.

In the first openings of the parental affections there is a very sensible pleasure.

—Hence,

—Hence, as these valuable friends have often confessed, a thousand new and entertaining thoughts pressed in upon their minds, on this occasion.—A wide and extensive prospect of various delights, unallayed with experienced disappointments, presented itself to their view. Year behind year seemed to rise in a long succession of growing joys, not a little magnified, perhaps, by the powers of imagination. By imperceptible degrees, that excess of affection, which we call **RONDNES**, stole upon them; and they could scarcely see, at least were unwilling to see, any thing before them but the happy accomplishment of all their wishes as to the enjoyments of this world. And thus the pleasing scene continued for near four years, still improving upon them, and flattering their hopes.

But alas! What a vain shew is all mortal felicity! These bright, these pleasing expectations, in an unlooked for hour,

hour, are all clouded over, sunk and lost, in the distressing gloom of deep unfathomable providence ! A violent disorder, on a sudden, seizes the child ; and before they could well recollect themselves, and prepare for the trial, DEATH lays his cold hand upon it ; the vital current stops ; the eyes sink in darkness ; it moves, it breathes no more ;—Methinks I see them now !—At first they stand astonished, and speechless ; scarcely able to believe, though they see it with their own eyes, that their just now living, lovely, and beloved son, is become, indeed, a mere lifeless carcase !—The object of their dearest earthly delight, a spectacle of terror !—At length tears force their way, and they pour forth their unavailing sorrows, with the utmost violence. And it must be acknowledged here was great reason for distress. A life so long expected, so lately given, so greatly enjoyed, taken so suddenly away ! No heart,

heart, not lost to all the feelings of humanity, but must, in such circumstances, be affected. They were, perhaps, too much so. It is hard, sometimes, to keep these better sort of affections within due bounds. We, who were present, endeavour to administer some consolation ; but alas ! in this sudden tumult of grief, we were soon struck speechless, and could only mourn with them.—They themselves try, by some word, some look of fortitude and comfort, to lessen each others distress, but all in vain ; these very endeavours do but renew and increase it. I thought it best to leave them for the present, and therefore went home, and wrote the letter I here enclose to you, which, after the first impetuosity of their grief was over, and I could hope to engage their attention, I took care to send them ; and I trust not without some good effect.

I am. &c.

L E T -

LETTER XV.

To Mr. and Mrs. * * * * *

On the Death of their only Child.

YOU have, my dear and honoured friends, long ago learnt, in theory at least, how little the enjoyments of time are to be depended upon ; how they flatter our hopes in their approach, and disappoint them when they arrive ; either from the weakness of their nature, or the shortness of their duration.—In consequence of this knowledge, you have again and again resolved not to set your hearts too confidently upon any merely temporal good, but to treat every thing below the skies with a becoming indifference ; and devote your best and warmest affections to the supreme excellence, the never-failing source of all felicity ; and this from full conviction, that this government

vernment of yourselves was highly necessary to your present comfort, as well as future happiness.

Now the divine providence calls upon you to reduce these just sentiments into practice, and to act, as well as think, thus rightly. Now is the time to prove the strength of your principles, and how far you have realized the promises you have professed to believe; and to correct and improve your faith and experience, by a renewed application to the sacred writings, where you will find a rich treasure of truly divine doctrines, promises, examples, that tend to inspire you with sentiments and hopes, as high as heaven, as boundless as infinitude, and as lasting as the ages of eternity!

From my own repeated experience I can, and do, sincerely sympathize with you, in this trying providence. Friendship enlivens every reflection on your distresses, and sinks it still deeper into the heart.

heart. This leads me with earnest supplication to the throne of grace for you; prompts me to exhort you to hope still in GOD, and the gracious promises of his word.—And is this all, perhaps you will say, that your friendship can do for us in this great trial? This is very little indeed!—True; but this little may possibly be the means of leading you to the GOD of all consolation, to take a nearer and more attentive view of his goodness and mercy, and to trust more intirely there for your happiness. If so, it will serve at least to lessen the violence of your sorrow.

RELIGION, the religion of CHRIST, which you profess, never appears more illustrious, more lovely, than when viewed from under the cloud of affliction. Methinks I see her now (it is no hard or unnatural figure) approaching YOU with that encouraging sweetness, that amiable divinity of manner, peculiar to herself;

P

and

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and hear her addressing you in some such language as this.

“ Consider, my friends, there is a di-
 “ vine hand in this stroke ; the hand of
 “ a God of infinite wisdom and good-
 “ ness, who does every thing right and
 “ well, not only in respect of his own
 “ designs, but the happiness of all that
 “ cordially submit to his government.
 “ His faithful word declares, and de-
 “ clares it for the hour of adversity—
 “ All things shall work together for
 “ good, to them that love God, as
 “ you cannot but be conscious to your-
 “ selves you do.

“ Consider also, that the little grow-
 “ ing delight you have lost, might, in
 “ time, have taken too fast hold of your
 “ affections, and drawn them in some
 “ culpable degree from the supreme
 “ good ; have rendered you less mindful
 “ of his friendship, and cooled your de-
 “ sires to that “ loving-kindness which
 “ is

L E T T E R X V. 211

" is better than life," with all its most
 " important and pleasing enjoyments.
 " This measure, therefore, in the con-
 " duct of providence, might, perhaps,
 " be necessary to preserve you from a
 " disposition so wrong in itself, and so
 " hurtful in its consequences. Besides,
 " the sad experience of many mournful
 " parents teaches you to believe it possi-
 " ble, at least, that had this child been
 " spared, it might many ways have disap-
 " pointed your most promising hopes, and
 " proved the source of a thousand heart-
 " rending sorrows far more painful than
 " what you now feel. And it is but
 " looking upwards to the heavenly
 " world, and a glorious scene of divine
 " instruction, and comfort opens to your
 " view.—Divine * faith will shew you
P 2
" the

* I conclude this, because we read, " that God
 " delighteth in mercy—That the blood of CHRIST
 " cleanseth from all sin—That out of the mouth of
" babes

" he unembodied spirit of your son, de-
 " livered from all sin and sorrow, wash-
 " ed in the blood of the lamb; in full
 " possession of all its intellectual powers;
 " employed incessantly in the contem-
 " plation and praises of redeeming grace,
 " and ever enjoying the light of that
 " countenance which diffuses joy unut-
 " terable through all the wide regions of
 " immortality! And in such a view of
 " things, would you, can you wish it
 " back again to your weak unsatisfying
 " embraces? It might give you some
 " pleasure; but is it not a far greater
 " to see it with your FATHER, and your
 " GOD, in that world of glory where
 " you hope yourselves to dwell for
 " ever?

" Complain then no more; dry up
 " your unavailing tears; realize the dis-

" coveries

" babes and sucklings God perfects his praise—And
 " that of such is the kingdom of heaven."

“ coveries of faith ; justify the wisdom,
 “ and adore the grace that now certainly
 “ attends, and will one day shine, in this
 “ providence, dark as it may now ap-
 “ pear.

“ Nature, indeed, must feel on such
 “ occasions ; it is reasonable ; it is pious :
 “ but immoderate grief, is neither good
 “ in itself, nor can be the means of any
 “ good to you. Affliction is one con-
 “ siderable part of the discipline your
 “ present state requires. Of what kind,
 “ and in what measure, it should be ad-
 “ ministered, it is certainly best to leave
 “ intirely with G O D.

“ Your case is not singular, Misery
 “ presses on mankind, on every hand ;
 “ none are free. The philosopher* long
 “ ago remarked with justice,—“ That
 “ men would sooner want tears to shed,
 P 3 than

* Lacrymæ nobis deerant, adæquam causæ delendæ.

“ than occasions to shed them.” And a greater than he* has told you, “ that man, born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble ; he cometh up, and is cut down like a flower.”—To day, in all the vigour of life and bloom of prosperity ; to-morrow a wretch withered with the desolating blast of adversity !

“ Remember, you have still a thousand enjoyments in possession, and infinitely more in hope, all equally forfeited with this ; and remember too, that he who has thus taken YOUR son from you, has given you his OWN ;—given him to grieve, that you might rejoice ; to die, that you might live ; you and your child for ever. “ Be still then, and know that he is GOD ;” a GOD gracious and merciful ; nor the less so for this rebuke, severe as it may now seem,

“ Let

* Job,

" Let not your thoughts ponder too
" long over the breathless clay, nor in-
" dulse too far the warm imagination
" in pointing out the various delights you
" might have possessed, had this child
" been still living. These are too often
" mere illusions at best, and often dan-
" gerous. Instead of this, endeavour
" to fix your eye upon the gospel of
" CHRIST, and contemplate its doc-
" trines with more devout attention.
" Consider " what manner of love the
" Father hath bestowed upon you, in
" calling and making you the children
" of his grace ;" think what abundant
" provision he has made for your sup-
" port and comfort in the sufferings,
" death, and resurrection of his son ; the
" illustrious example of his patience, and
" that of many of his followers ; and
" the assurances he has given you of
" present succours and future glory ; a
" glory made exceedingly more abun-
" dant by the afflictions you properly

"endure and improve.—You now
 "mourn, but your mourning shall soon
 "have an end, and be lost in the joy of
 "eternity.—God himself will wipe
 "away all tears from your eyes, and
 "the deepest impressions of sorrow from
 "your hearts. If you have any doubt
 "of this, instead of giving up your
 "thoughts to useless grief, think how
 "such doubts may be effectually re-
 "moved, and your calling and election
 "made sure ; how you may meet the last
 "enemy, and bear the last conflict with
 "a fortitude and hope becoming your
 "profession. Take occasion from this sad
 "experience of the vanity of the dearest
 "joys in this world of mortality below,
 "to set your affections on the things
 "above ; and converse more constantly,
 "more intimately, with that world,
 "where the objects of your delight will
 "never disappoint your expectations,
 "but all be solid, satisfying, immortal !
 "TIME is nothing, ETERNITY is all !
 " Nor

" Nor should you forget that provi-
 " dence has placed you in a station of life
 " that naturally attracts the attention of
 " many who are prepared to observe your
 " behaviour on this, and all such distin-
 " guishing occasions ; do not suffer your-
 " selves to sink in their eye ; but endea-
 " vour to maintain the dignity of your
 " Christianity, and do honour to the
 " grace of God bestowed on you. Thus
 " the good will be animated to faith and
 " patience by your example, and the
 " wicked be forced to confess that there
 " is a glorious reality in the gospel of
 " CHRIST, and such as inspires the mind
 " with a fortitude and hope superior to
 " all adversity. Impatience, dejection,
 " and pusillanimous complainings, dis-
 " grace the Christian character, and give
 " the infidel world a mean opinion of
 " doctrines and promises that cannot
 " support their believers under even a
 " common calamity."

This

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This is the instructive and encouraging
language of the RELIGION of JESUS—
May you, my dear and honoured friends,
hear it with attention, and feel its divine
power !

I am, &c.

T H E E N D .



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